Aiming at Virtue in Plato

IAKOVOS VASILIOU

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AIMING AT VIRTUE IN PLATO

This innovative study of Plato's ethics focuses on the concept of virtue. Based on detailed readings of the most prominent Platonic dialogues on virtue, it argues that there is a central yet previously unnoticed conceptual distinction in Plato between the idea of virtue as the supreme aim of one's actions and the determination of which action-tokens or -types are virtuous. Appreciating the "aiming/determining distinction" provides detailed and mutually consistent readings of the most well-known Platonic dialogues on virtue as well as original interpretations of central Platonic questions. Unlike most examinations of Plato's ethics, this study does not take as its centerpiece the "eudaimonist framework," which focuses on the relationship between virtue and happiness. Instead *Aiming at Virtue in Plato* argues that the dialogues themselves begin with the idea of the supremacy of virtue, examine how that claim can be defended, and address how to determine what constitutes the virtuous action.

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To my parents,
Bill and Irene Vasiliou

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There is some overlap between chapter three, section four of this book and section 2 of my "Disputing Socratic Principles: Character and Argument in the 'Polus Episode' of the *Gorgias*" in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 84.3 (2002), 245–72.

Introduction

1 AIMING AND DETERMINING

In the *Cleitophon*, a short and strange dialogue attributed to Plato, the character "Socrates" speaks only twice. He accuses the eponymous interlocutor on the one hand of telling people that it is a waste of time to associate with him, while on the other of lauding contact with Thrasymachus, the infamous character from Book 1 of Plato's *Republic*. Cleitophon replies that Socrates has not heard the whole story: he is in certain respects deeply impressed by Socrates, but in other ways sharply critical. Always open to correction and betterment, Socrates is happy to hear Cleitophon's complaints and the last four Stephanus pages of the work consist solely of a speech by Cleitophon in which he sharply distinguishes between two tasks: (1) persuading a person that virtue[1] is more important than anything else; and (2) saying precisely what virtue is. According to Cleitophon, Socrates does an excellent job, better than any other person, at persuading and exhorting people to pursue virtue and the care of their souls (407a7, 410b4–6), but he is utterly unhelpful when it comes to saying what virtue actually is. Because Socrates is so useless with this substantive question, Cleitophon is forced to conclude that either Socrates' ability to champion virtue does not in any way imply that he knows what virtue is, or else Socrates is simply unwilling to tell him. It is Socrates' failure on this second issue that leads Cleitophon to turn to Thrasymachus (410c–d). The dialogue ends with no response from Socrates.

Cleitophon's speech suggests a distinction between two sorts of ethical principles: what I call "aiming principles" and "determining principles." An aiming principle tells the agent what overall *aim* she ought to have in acting, for example, to do the virtuous action; because this particular aiming

[1] I translate ἀρετή as "virtue" or "excellence," varying only for stylistic reasons.

principle is so important to Socrates[2] and Plato, I shall give it a name: the "supremacy of virtue" (henceforth, SV). SV says that doing the virtuous action trumps any other aim one may have in acting. An aiming principle functions in two ways: as an "explicit aim" and as a "limiting condition" for action.[3] When SV functions as an explicit aim, an agent who adheres to SV will explicitly aim to do the virtuous action above all. In other situations, however, SV may operate as a "limiting condition." When acting for some end other than virtue (for example, pleasure or financial gain), SV requires that the agent nevertheless not act in a way that is contrary to virtue. The role of SV as a limiting condition is expressed in Socrates' well-known statement that "it is never right to do wrong."[4] We can now see how one can follow SV in all actions, without that implying the implausible view that in every action one ought explicitly to aim at acting virtuously. Many actions may be morally neutral, but what is crucial about the agent who adheres to SV is that she will never knowingly act in a way contrary to virtue.

Consider, by contrast, an agent who holds a different aiming principle than SV; let's call it the "supremacy of survival (SS)." According to SS a person should aim at surviving above all. SS too may function both as an explicit aim and as a limiting condition. Sometimes the adherent of SS will explicitly deliberate about which action will ensure his staying alive. In addition, SS may also function as a limiting condition insofar as the agent committed to SS will not (intentionally) perform any action that leads to his death when, for example, he is aiming at pleasure; "It is never right to act in a way that leads to one's death" would be the expression of SS as a limiting condition. If an action does not lead to death, then the adherent of SS is allowed to choose to do it or not on whatever grounds he likes (as far as SS is concerned). As we shall see later in the book, SS is a view that Socrates frequently disparages. In general, then, an aiming principle sets the supreme aim of an agent's action: for SV, the supreme aim is virtue; for SS, the supreme aim is survival.[5] Henceforth when I say that an agent who is committed to SV "aims to act virtuously above all," I mean that as shorthand for "makes acting virtuously the supreme aim of her actions

[2] Unless explicitly noted otherwise, "Socrates" refers to the character in Plato's dialogues, not to the historical figure. I discuss my approach to the dialogues below.

[3] I borrow the term "limiting condition" from Herman (1981/1993), 14–17.

[4] "To do wrong" translates ἀδικεῖν, which is also sometimes translated "to do injustice." It is important to remember that the word carries with it the broader connotation of wrongdoing in general. This will be particularly important in the discussions of the *Crito*, *Gorgias*, and *Republic*. The just action, the right action, and the virtuous action are the same.

[5] For a hedonist, the supreme aim is pleasure.

so that virtue will sometimes be the explicit aim of her actions and will always at least function as a limiting condition on actions which aim at other ends."

SV does not by itself rule in or out any non-evaluatively described action-type, and it says nothing about *how to determine* what the virtuous action actually is, which is precisely Cleitophon's complaint. I thus distinguish between establishing the supreme aim of an agent's action (which is the function of an aiming principle) and the distinct issue of *how to determine* what action is going to constitute the virtuous action in some circumstance.[6] Thus merely adhering to SV leaves open what sorts of considerations may be relevant in any particular deliberation about what to do, as well as what particular action such deliberation might yield; commitment to SV ensures only that, barring error about which action is virtuous, the agent's action will be the virtuous one or at least not contrary to virtue. The pleasure or pain the action causes oneself or others, the financial cost, the risk one runs of life or death, may all be relevant considerations in *determining* what the virtuous action actually is here and now. SV simply but importantly maintains that a person's *aim* must always be to act virtuously above all (understood as explained above), and not to save her life, or to cause pleasure, or to generate financial gain, or even to follow the law.

By contrast, a determining principle (e.g., a proposed moral rule such as "Never kill anyone") would be one that actually *determines* which action or action-type is forbidden or required; once you adopt "Never kill anyone" as a principle, then, at least as far as that principle is concerned, if an action involves killing someone, it is forbidden. The role of a determining principle may be played by a principle (a moral rule), but it may also be fulfilled by other means, reasonable or unreasonable, such as intuition, tarot cards, following a virtuous person, and so on. I shall refer to questions about which token actions or action-types are virtuous as *determining questions*, because they involve determining what the virtuous action actually is, whereas I shall call questions about what supreme aim one should have in acting *aiming questions*. According to Cleitophon, then, while Socrates has a clear answer to an aiming question (and he is apparently very persuasive about this), he utterly fails to offer answers to determining questions.

[6] There are parallel, but less interesting, determining questions at issue with SS as well: "Here and now what token action will save my life?", or, when SS functions as a limiting condition, "Will this token action lead to my death?" These are less interesting than determining questions about virtue because they are not ordinarily difficult to answer nor the subject of dispute.

It is well known that the ethics of Plato and Aristotle do not offer us determining *principles*.[7] We look in vain in their writings for particular moral rules, containing only non-evaluative terms, that determine which actions are virtuous and which vicious. Indeed, for many contemporary scholars, it is an advantage of the ancients that they do not fall into what is seen as the trap of trying to supply determining principles, but instead focus on people's characters. By developing a virtuous character, the agent will act virtuously because of the distinctive outlook on the world that she has acquired. I have one comment about this here. We might agree that there are no determining principles in Plato and Aristotle, but nevertheless believe that they argue about moral principles of a different type, namely, aiming principles. Socrates' claim that one should look to virtue above all in action and that it is never right to do wrong is such a principle (SV).[8] SV, however, both because of its generality and because it contains an evaluative term, does not by itself resolve the problem of determining what the virtuous or right action is, either in general or in some concrete circumstance. Cleitophon is understandably frustrated. He has been successfully persuaded to commit himself to virtue, but then SV leaves him without any way of determining what virtue is. But if we distinguish between aiming and determining principles we can at least qualify the claim that Plato rejects moral rules or principles in general: while he may deny that one can supply *determining* principles, this does not imply that he rejects all universal moral principles, for he is concerned with and argues for an *aiming* principle, SV.[9]

This book argues that in the ethics of Socrates and Plato virtue is crucially conceived of as an aim, and that this is contrasted with determining questions about virtue, which seek to know what virtuous action is in general or in specific instances. I examine how the aiming/determining distinction structures Plato's conception of virtue in what are typically referred to as the "early" and "middle" dialogues. I concentrate in detail on how arguments in Plato about SV differ significantly from those about *what virtue is*, and show that the dialogues themselves distinguish between them.

2 VIRTUE, AIMS, AND EUDAIMONIA

Almost all contemporary discussions of ancient ethics importantly and usefully take eudaimonia or "happiness," as it is traditionally translated, as the supreme aim of action, and then explain how different ancient theories

[7] An exception is the hedonic calculus proposed at the end of the *Protagoras*. See 4.4 for discussion. (References such as 4.4 refer to chapter four, section four.)

[8] See chapter one.

[9] I argue that this holds for Aristotle as well, see Vasiliou (2007).

fill in its content. The nature of eudaimonia is the central topic of most philosophical discussions about ancient ethics. It is a common principle of such studies that, beginning with Plato, what all ancient moral theories have in common despite their particular differences is a "eudaimonist framework."[10] Its fundamental question is: "What sort of life ought one to lead?" (i.e. "What is eudaimonia?"). The main components of philosophical conceptions of eudaimonia are virtue (both moral and intellectual), pleasure, and the "external goods," the last being Aristotle's expression for goods of the body, such as health and beauty, and material goods broadly speaking, such as wealth, good luck, noble birth, and good reputation. Different philosophers and philosophical schools then argue about which combination of these goods constitutes happiness. The *locus classicus* for the eudaimonist framework is, of course, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. He begins by offering a highly abstract and formal account of happiness, and then seeks to specify its content. The situation with Plato is somewhat less clear, although he is still understood as belonging within this framework.[11]

A reader might reasonably think that there is a kind of aiming/determining distinction that operates at the level of eudaimonia. We take as our starting point that all people aim to do well and live well, that is, to live happily, and then we seek to determine what happiness is. One might say, then, that the aiming principle is "the supremacy of happiness" and that determining principles tell us what happiness consists in. I refrain, however, from using "aiming" and "determining" this way in the context of eudaimonia and its determination. Of course I do not deny that our ordinary language (and ancient Greek as well) speaks of aiming at happiness and of determining what it is. But it is significant that the posited "aiming principle," "the supremacy of happiness," is practically speaking a tautology, as Plato and Aristotle themselves admit. Aristotle says that there is general

[10] See, e.g., Annas (1993). This claim does not include the Cyrenaics, who Annas argues constitute the exception that proves the rule.

[11] Vlastos (1991), 203, refers to "the Eudaemonist Axiom" and claims that "once staked out by Socrates, [it] becomes foundational for virtually all subsequent moralists of classical antiquity." Some of those who bring to bear the eudaimonist framework most strongly recognize that Plato does not raise the same explicit questions about happiness as Aristotle, although they still interpret the dialogues, both "early" and "middle," as eudaimonist. For example, Irwin (1995), 248, writes: "At the beginning of the [*Nicomachean*] *Ethics*, Aristotle sees that it is important to form some conception of happiness before trying to decide whether different claims about how to acquire happiness are justified. We noticed that the Socratic dialogues do not take up Aristotle's question. In the *Republic* Plato does not take it up either, but we must try to identify assumptions about happiness that convince him that the just person is happier than the unjust." Brickhouse and Smith (1994), 103, claim that the "Principle of Eudaimonism," the view that "a thing is good only insofar as it is conducive to happiness," is "at the heart of Socratic ethics." They cite no texts to justify this.

verbal agreement on this question (*NE* 1.4, 1095a17–20).[12] *Everyone* wishes to do well; no one would say that he wishes to do badly, no matter how warped or flawed his conception of doing well may be. Contrast this with the genuine aiming principle, SV. To say that one should act virtuously above all is a substantive and controversial claim, and I shall restrict the concept of an aiming principle to such claims. Thus the *question* "What is eudaimonia?" is an "aiming *question*" insofar as it asks what a person's supreme aim should be. But for it to count as an aiming *principle*, one would have to state in a contentful way what one's supreme aim is, for example, virtue or pleasure. Saying that one's supreme end is living well or doing well is not yet to make a substantive claim about *what* one is aiming at. For this reason, I do not regard "the supremacy of happiness" as an aiming principle. Given that SV is the aiming principle, the question "What is virtue?," either in general or in some concrete circumstance, then counts as a *determining* question.

I restrict the terms in this way because the focus of this study is virtue, not eudaimonia. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle believe that eudaimonia is essentially bound up with virtue, even if each differs about the relationship of virtue to eudaimonia.[13] They all maintain SV, and so they believe that one ought to aim at virtue above all; none of these philosophers holds that one should ever act contrary to virtue. In contrast to most contemporary work, this study *begins* from the idea that virtue is supreme (as I shall argue Socrates himself does), considers how this claim is defended, and then asks how we determine what *it* is. I hope to show that the focus on virtue as an aim yields new interpretations of central Platonic dialogues and leads us to lesser-known passages within these texts that have not attracted notice in part because of the almost universal focus on eudaimonia and the eudaimonist framework.

3 DISPUTES ABOUT VIRTUE AND ITS SUPREMACY

According to the above distinction I separate two types of deliberation. In one sort, let's call it "aiming deliberation," we assume that a person has determined, somehow, that one action is the virtuous one and a different action is, for example, financially profitable, but contrary to virtue. A person might then wonder which she ought to do, the virtuous action or the

[12] Plato does as well: for example, *Euthyd*. 278e.

[13] I say "essentially bound up" as a way of remaining neutral about the precise nature of the relationship between them – whether virtue is necessary and/or sufficient for happiness, whether it is virtuous *activity* rather than virtue, and so on.

profitable one. The familiar question of the moral skeptic arises at this point: why should I do the virtuous action, she asks, rather than the non-virtuous but financially profitable one? Socrates believes that virtue as an aim ought always to trump whatever other aim we may have in acting; one should never act contrary to virtue (SV). The principle SV, however, in no way *answers* the skeptic. By providing the supreme aim of choice it simply *tells* the skeptic and everyone else which of the two actions to choose. Now Socrates' claim that virtue is more important than anything else has been interpreted, loosely, as saying that he thinks that one should not care *at all* about money, physical health, death, and so on, which is taken to mean that he would never take such things *into consideration* in a deliberation whose aim is to do the virtuous thing. But we shall see that this is incorrect. What we might call, by contrast, "determining deliberation" is quite different from aiming deliberation. Once we have *accepted* that virtue is the supreme aim (and thus excluded at least one kind of moral skeptic from the conversation), virtue is not then *also* a consideration in the deliberation about what constitutes acting virtuously in this or that circumstance. External goods, however, will be.[14]

While no one disputes that she wants to be happy nor does any one need to be persuaded to be happy, that we ought to do the virtuous action above all is another matter. This leads to the question of *why* doing the virtuous thing should be our supreme aim, and not, for example, financial gain or survival. We, like Socrates and his contemporaries, have beliefs about what is right and wrong and we can act on them without having answers to questions about their origin or their justification. In the context of an aiming deliberation Socrates assumes that a person has, somehow, determined that action A is the virtuous action but not financially profitable, while action B is financially profitable but not virtuous. Given this, he asks, "Do you think you should choose A or B?" And in fact for most of us, I think, the answer is "A." The moral skeptic, of course, says "B"; so the simple asking of this question fails to move him.[15] But for almost everyone else, this

[14] I show in chapter two the damage that this confusion has done to our understanding of the *Apology* and *Crito*. Since it appears that Socrates *is* taking into consideration his life, his children, his friends, money, and so on in deciding what to do, commentators must ignore prominent parts of the *Apology* and *Crito* (or else dismiss them as rhetoric, sophistry, irony or merely *ad hominem* argument). But if we appreciate that he is not taking the good condition of these things as his *aim*, but only taking them into consideration as factors in determining what the virtuous action *is*, we shall see that there is no conflict, and we can make sense of all of his remarks as consistent.

[15] An ancient skeptic would of course say "no more A than B." But in this discussion by "skeptic" I mean someone who in some way challenges or repudiates ordinary claims of morality. Thus Thrasymachus and Callicles will count as skeptics, even though they clearly do not meet the ancient definition of a skeptic as someone who suspends judgement.

point has some teeth. Without a clear method for answering determining questions, the call by itself to commit to SV will rely on people's untutored beliefs about which actions *are* virtuous. But even so, being consciously committed to SV can have a substantial effect on action, and a potentially good effect, if people paused in many situations for one additional thought and asked themselves whether they were doing what they took to be the virtuous action.

We should recognize that the agent committed to SV does not necessarily have *to think the thought* "I ought to do what is virtuous" each time she acts, even in cases where there is a virtuous action that must be done. The worry here is related to a criticism by Bernard Williams. Williams maintains that in a variety of cases the thought that one ought to do the virtuous action would be "one thought too many."[16] If a loved one falls into a river, and an agent begins her deliberation about what to do with the thought that she ought to do what is virtuous above all, it does seem reasonable to think that there is something amiss. A virtuous agent would not have such a thought, regardless of its truth, before acting. And if she did, it would detract from her virtue.

We can agree with the "one thought too many" point, but still quite reasonably acknowledge that Socrates' fellow Athenians frequently have what we might call "one thought too few." Ignoring entirely any question of whether they are acting virtuously, they focus simply on the aims of survival, wealth, reputation, and so on. It seems to me that the same holds for us as well. Many of us might act better if we paused to ask whether we were aiming at the excellent action, or simply aiming at what secured our professional reputation, financial gain, pleasure, and so on.[17] We can grant the correctness of Williams' point – particularly in cases where a quick and relatively straightforward decision must be made – while still recognizing that sometimes, indeed perhaps fairly often, an agent *ought* explicitly to remind herself of her commitment to SV. I believe that this is a significant part of the force of Socrates' role as "gadfly" of Athens (*Ap*. 30e): he accuses his fellow citizens of typically having one thought too few. As we shall see in chapter two, when Socrates must decide whether or not to escape from prison in the *Crito*, he does think that it ought to be explicit that the aim of his action is to do what is virtuous. For these reasons I shall retain the expression "aiming at virtue," with the understanding that it ought not to

[16] Williams (1976), 214–15.

[17] There is a related (and quite complex) political question about the deliberations of nations. Is the military supremacy, economic health, or even the survival of a nation more important than its acting virtuously?

imply that the agent will necessarily have a particular thought in her head, although sometimes she will and she ought to.

A different problem arises insofar as someone could easily, of course, be too cavalier about his assumption that the action he is about to engage in *is* in fact the truly virtuous one. This is just the sort of danger a figure like Euthyphro poses. While Euthyphro's commitment to SV is secure, he shows no interest in deliberating about determining what the virtuous action *is*; indeed, I shall argue that Plato depicts him as even failing to understand the importance of the question (see 4.3). Moral and religious fundamentalists claim to devote themselves to what is right, and not to what is pleasurable or financially profitable, but they then appear to think that determining what is right is an entirely straightforward matter. They share Socrates' commitment to SV, while by contrast with him they are unquestioningly confident that they know what virtue *is*; this can be a dangerous and repellent combination. In examining the difference between aiming and determining questions, we, unlike Euthyphro, must be careful not to "moralize." A person "moralizes" if she, like a fundamentalist, takes determining questions about virtue to be prematurely settled without adequate justification. Thus a person moralizes if she assumes, without argument, that, for example, telling a falsehood is always wrong or doing someone physical harm is always wrong. One might agree with Socrates that one must never do wrong, but then be unjustifiably confident that one knows which actions or action-types *are* wrong. This would be "to moralize" in the sense I intend.

When Socrates claims that it is never right to do wrong, the question that ought to follow is, "What *is* right and wrong?" That is, SV leaves us with a puzzle about how to *determine* what virtue is, while accepting that virtue ought to be our supreme aim. There are two questions here: one might ask what the virtuous action is in the here and now, and one might ask what virtuous actions are in general. The dialogues, as we shall see, address both of these questions. In chapter two, we shall examine how Socrates deals with determining what the virtuous action is in the here and now. He offers an example of how to put SV to work in action. In the so-called dialogues of definition, considered in chapter four, we see Socrates and his interlocutors try to determine what virtuous actions are in general by trying to answer the Socratic "What is F?" question.

I have just discussed the force of SV on figures other than the moral skeptic. The distinction between SV and questions about what virtue is, however, also results in a proliferation of skeptics. One could hold an ordinary conception of virtue, but deny SV, that is, deny that one ought to

do the virtuous action above all; in chapter three we will see that Polus in the *Gorgias* is such a figure. Then again one might agree that virtue is most important, but hold a radical and unconventional conception of what virtue is, disagreeing both about particular token actions and more general categorizations; Callicles is such a figure. Finally one might be willing to shift positions both on whether virtue is supreme and on what virtue is. I shall argue in chapter five that this fits Thrasymachus. So although I shall begin in the opening chapters, following Socrates' lead, by ignoring the challenges of the moral skeptic, the conceptual structure that I see at work in the dialogues actually generates not simply one skeptic, but a range of skeptics. The dialogues work through these possibilities to reveal the particular requirements that arise in dealing with particular types. In chapters six through eight I turn to *Republic* 2–10. I argue that the aiming/determining distinction is crucial to understanding the central argument of that work and its unity. We shall see that *Republic* 4's notorious answer to the question "What is justice?"– that it consists in the harmony of the tripartite soul – is part of the justification for SV; it tells us *why* we should be just. By contrast the metaphysics of the middle books, which introduce the transcendent Forms as the objects of knowledge for philosophers, explains how the outstanding determining questions may be answered.

4 SOCRATES AND PLATO ON VIRTUOUS ACTIONS AND VIRTUOUS CHARACTERS: A STANDARD ACCOUNT

It may be useful here in the Introduction to sketch briefly what I take to be a common understanding of Plato's ethics and then by contrast to explain how this book's focus on virtue and on the aiming/determining distinction affects it. In the dialogues typically called "early" or "Socratic,"[18] the character Socrates believes that virtue is the most important thing, but he also disavows knowledge of what it is. This is one of the "paradoxical" features of Socrates. At the same time, a familiar account proceeds, Socrates believes that virtue is knowledge. This consists of two claims: (1) that knowledge is necessary for virtue; and (2) that knowledge is sufficient for virtue. While the first is plausible enough, the second is far-fetched, for it denies the possibility of incontinence. The more mature Plato corrects for this. In the *Republic*, for example, Plato introduces a tripartite division within the soul, which allows for the possibility of intra-psychic conflict. He

[18] See Vlastos (1991) and Irwin (1995).

thus rejects Socratic intellectualism by allowing that there are non-rational motivations in a human being that can conflict with, and sometimes win out over, a person's reason, leading him to act incontinently. Not all wrong action, then, is a matter of ignorance. Further, the "Socrates" of the *Republic* (i.e. Plato) provides positive accounts of the nature of the virtues, which had eluded the "Socrates" of the earlier, aporetic dialogues.

On such an account we begin with a Socrates who does not know what all virtuous actions have in common; he cannot find the Socratic form which would enable him knowledgeably to identify one action or another as being virtuous. This is a serious epistemological problem: how do we know what the virtuous action, either in the here and now, or in general, *is*? But Socrates also, on the usual reading, maintains something about what it is to *be* virtuous. To possess a virtue is to possess knowledge. At this point, commentators rapidly proceed to discuss the implausibility of the idea that being virtuous consists entirely in the possession of knowledge. The discussion has moved from a question in moral epistemology – how do we know what the right action is? – to a related, but distinct, question in moral psychology: is possession of knowledge by itself sufficient for an agent to act on that knowledge? What gets dropped in the shift to a discussion of the possibility of incontinence is the question of how to identify virtuous actions in the first place. Once we are discussing the merits or defects of the idea that virtue is knowledge, we are concerned with the question of what it is to *be* a virtuous person and have stopped considering how to determine which actions are virtuous.

Of course the standard reading of Socrates and Plato explains this. Plato has moved from an "act-centered" account of virtue to an "agent-centered" one. Accordingly, when Plato defines the virtues in the *Republic*, he defines what it is to *be* just, courageous, and so on, but he does not tell us what all just or courageous actions have in common. This is because Plato has allegedly given up trying to give an account of just action, having seen the futility in that,[19] and will instead say what it is to be a just person. And once there is an account of this, then the just actions will be those actions that are done by a just person. Presumably the fact that these actions issue from someone whose soul is harmonious *ipso facto* makes them just.

I am not denying the importance of questions about incontinence. But we should be clear that if Socrates believes that virtue is knowledge, and, presumably, knowledge of goods and evils, then what the virtuous person

[19] As perhaps Socrates also had when he turns in the "dialogues of definition" to questions about, for example, what it is to *be* courageous rather than questions about what courageous action is.

will know is how to determine which actions are good and which are evil. He will have some knowledgeable way of correctly identifying what is objectively the right or wrong action in any situation (to take examples that will be important, whether one should escape from prison or prosecute one's father for murder). Whether knowing this will be sufficient to get him to *act* in accordance with that knowledge is a wonderful and interesting problem, but we shouldn't allow it to eclipse the problems of *what the knowledge is* that enables one to determine what *is* just or virtuous, of how one should act given that one *does not* possess this knowledge (as Socrates claims is his own position), and of how such knowledge might be obtained.

I argue in this book that the problem of determining what the virtuous action is in concrete circumstances, perhaps via knowing what virtuous actions are in general, is front and center throughout the "early" and "middle" dialogues. Socrates never claims to know which actions (or action-types) are virtuous, neither in the "early" dialogues nor in the *Republic*. He consistently disavows throughout the entire corpus knowledge of how to determine whether some action is virtuous or not.[20] When Socrates "defines" the virtues in *Republic* 4 he is not answering the question that was unanswered in the earlier dialogues (see 8.1–2). In those dialogues Socrates is in part searching for a way of determining which action *is* virtuous, and accounts of what it is to *be* virtuous go no distance whatsoever towards solving that problem (see 4.2). If Euthyphro is attempting to determine what the right action is with respect to his father, knowing that justice is a harmony in the tripartite soul or that virtue is knowledge of good and evil does not help at all. He needs, as Socrates tells him, some way of determining whether prosecuting his father for murder is the right action or not. I shall argue that the *Republic* does not *replace* an act-centered account of virtue with an agent-centered one. Rather Socrates tells us where knowledge that would settle outstanding determining questions might be found (although he consistently continues to disavow having it): in knowledge of the Forms. The answer to Socrates' "What is F?" question in the *Republic* is not the account of virtues in Book 4, but the Forms. What makes actions, people, and everything that is just just is participation in the Form of Justice. The tripartite division of the soul with the corresponding accounts of what it is to *be* courageous, wise, and so on, by itself leaves the determining questions unresolved.

[20] His divine sign is an exception to this, but Socrates does not consider the divine sign as providing him with knowledge or understanding. The divine sign, as a form of revelation, simply tells Socrates not to do a certain token action. See 2.2.

This book, then, focuses on moral epistemology in the sense that it argues about Plato's concern with the problem of how to determine what the virtuous action is. It claims that this question is central to the dialogues' discussion of virtue and is not supplanted or resolved by switching to questions about what it is to *be* a virtuous person. If one is committed to SV, she will be committed to being virtuous, since, by definition, a virtuous person does virtuous actions. One who is committed to SV *is* motivated to act virtuously above all. This commitment also, I argue, focuses the agent on the proper problem: how to determine what the virtuous action is. Accounts of what it is to *be* virtuous are important for *defending* SV. A person might wonder why she would want to be virtuous. If Socrates can explain how being virtuous benefits a person, then she would see why she ought to be committed to doing virtuous actions above all and thus to being virtuous. We shall see that Socrates supplies consistent, but progressively more sophisticated, defenses of why one should commit to SV in the *Crito*, *Gorgias*, and *Republic*.

To avoid misunderstanding, I should say that I do not have an original contribution to make about the nature of Socratic ignorance; I simply agree with the standard response in the literature that Socrates denies having *knowledge* about what virtue is (which amounts to a denial that he can successfully answer the "What is F?" question about virtue: see 1.3.2), but that he doesn't deny that he may have beliefs and indeed true beliefs about what virtue is. I am thus not especially concerned with and never discuss in any detail the paradox about Socratic inquiry as expressed in the *Meno* (80d ff.).[21] I do not maintain that Socrates is "completely ignorant" about the content of virtue. As is well known, Socrates often takes ordinary examples of virtuous actions for granted in the course of his arguments. The distinctiveness of my argument will concern what Socrates' lack of knowledge is *about* – namely the answer to determining questions as to what the virtuous action *is*, either in the here and now or in general – and, by contrast, what he claims to have knowledge *about* – that he ought to be committed to doing the virtuous action above all (SV) (see chapter one). Socrates' view, and my interpretation of it, would indeed be absurd if it claimed that he adheres to, and even, as I argue, claims to know SV, but then is completely ignorant (that is, does not even have any beliefs about) which actions or action-types are virtuous. For commitment to SV to be at all meaningful of course we must, as indeed we do, have some beliefs and ideas about what is right and virtuous. As will be clear in chapters one and

[21] See Fine (1992) and (2004) for a clear account.

two, Socrates must rely on his beliefs about examples of virtuous behavior just like anyone else; he is different only insofar as he never claims to *know* which actions are virtuous.

Furthermore, if all one has are beliefs about which actions are virtuous, but doesn't have knowledge, one might worry that perhaps one's beliefs about which actions are virtuous may be entirely off the mark. The recollection theory, about which I say little in this book, might be a way of mitigating this sort of worry. If it is true that our souls existed prior to our birth and were in cognitive "contact" with the Forms, knowledge of which would enable us to know which sensible actions were just and unjust, then we might have some reason to think that our beliefs about virtue are not entirely false (especially those about which there is significant agreement) insofar as they may be partially recovered by our being reminded of Forms that we once knew but forgot (see 8.4).

A second familiar topic in the literature on the dialogues I discuss, but one which receives little direct treatment in this book, is the Socratic elenchus and the so-called "problem of the elenchus."[22] I cannot begin to treat this topic properly here nor do I have any original view about how the elenchus works. I do, however, discuss closely related topics such as the Socratic "What is F?" question (1.4 and 4.2), which involves universally failed attempts to say what all virtuous actions have in common, and the priority of definition. In the terms I am using, if Socrates (or his interlocutor) *could* successfully answer the "What is F?" question about virtue (which they never can), then they *would* know what all virtuous actions have in common and they would have answered the determining question for virtue in general; this knowledge, in turn, would enable them to say of any token action whether it is virtuous or not (see 4.2). As everyone agrees, the elenchus is (at least) used to elicit contradictions in an interlocutor's beliefs during his attempt to answer a Socratic "What is F?" question. All that needs to be concluded from this, as far as I am concerned, is that the interlocutor does not know what all virtuous actions have in common, since he has inconsistent beliefs; neither he nor Socrates need know which belief is necessarily the false one. More importantly, the principle that I shall argue that Socrates claims to know, SV, is not established via the elenchus but via an argument about the effect of virtuous actions on the soul, elaborated with increasing sophistication in the *Crito*, *Gorgias*, and *Republic* (see 2.4, 3.8, 7.2–3, and 8.1).[23]

[22] See Vlastos (1983/1994) and Benson (2000), chs. 2–4, for discussion and additional references. See too Nehamas (1998), ch. 3.

[23] A reader may be concerned that if, as I am arguing, Socrates claims to know that virtue is supreme (SV) without knowing what virtue is (i.e. without knowing how to answer the "What is F?" question

I hold, then, a rather deflationary view of the elenchus and do not think it establishes ethical truths. I should add, however, that I most emphatically do not think there is nothing "positive" about the method. Indeed, insofar as it exposes the lack of knowledge of an interlocutor about how to determine what the virtuous action is, it helps (or ought to help) avoid the serious danger of moralizing (see section 3 above, 5 below, and 4.3).

A final issue that is often treated in discussions of Platonic and Socratic ethics, but that I do not discuss in any detail, is the set of puzzles related to "the unity of virtue." As should be clear from my discussion of SV here and in the opening chapters, the virtuous action for Socrates is the action that is the excellent, right action in some circumstance (e.g., in Euthyphro's prosecution of his father or Socrates' deliberation about escaping from prison). I focus on how Plato argues that one ought to do the virtuous action above all and how he addresses the problem of determining what the virtuous action is. The differences between the particular virtues (temperance, piety, and so on) and the ways in which they relate to one another do not concern me here.

5 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SOME CENTRAL PRINCIPLES

Let me describe a couple of concepts and principles that will be critical to this study. Some of these will be uncontroversial, others not. Here I am simply stating them, and in a very general way showing some connections among them, and between them and the aiming/determining distinction.

I start with a point that will be familiar to anyone who has experience with Greek philosophy. For the Greeks, to be alive is to have a soul; using words with Latin roots, having a soul marks the difference between animate and inanimate objects. Thus to deny that things have souls in the Greek sense would be as absurd as to deny that there are living things. Human beings thus have both a body and a soul. In a human being the soul includes and is responsible for (at least) one's mind and thoughts, one's emotions, likes and dislikes, character traits, and so on. In Greek thought, the concept of soul by itself does not carry with it any necessary metaphysical or physical account of what it is to have a soul. A debate about *whether* people have souls in the Greek sense would be ridiculous. To deny it would be to deny that people have minds, thoughts, emotions, attitudes, character traits, and

about virtue), then he might be guilty of violating the "priority of definition." I address this objection in 1.4. Again, when I say Socrates doesn't know what virtue is, I mean that he cannot answer the "What is F?" question about virtue; I do not mean that he does not have beliefs and even true beliefs about which actions are virtuous.

so on. I shall simply translate ψυχή as "soul" throughout, understanding it as I have explained.

The belief that human beings have a body and soul is, as I have said, common to both popular and philosophical Greek thought. But Socrates crucially highlights the principle that the soul is something that *itself* can have a good or bad condition, independently of the condition of one's body or one's possessions. I shall express this idea by saying that the soul is an independent locus of harm and benefit.[24] Thus there are not only goods *of* the soul like useful knowledge, which any ordinary person would agree with, but also things that are good *for* the soul. That the body may be harmed or benefited is obvious, but the idea that one's character or soul might be in a state that is intrinsically better or worse is a distinct and more subtle claim. By "intrinsically better or worse" I mean that better or worse states of soul are not determined by considering their effects on the body or on one's possessions. Cleverness, for example, might be a good thing insofar as it enables me to acquire lots of money, but that is to say nothing whatsoever about whether cleverness is in itself a beneficial or harmful state for the soul. It is necessary simply for *understanding* Plato's ethical outlook (never mind whether one agrees with it or not) that one grasps that the soul itself is an independent locus of harm and benefit. We are thoroughly familiar with the contention that our characters are the most important part of ourselves. From earliest childhood we have been exposed to the idea that our characters, our real selves, are distinct from what we look like, what we own, how physically healthy we are, and so on; it is a concept central to the entire Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition. But it was a much newer idea for the Greeks than it is for us.[25]

If we accept that a human being has both a soul and a body, and that the soul is an independent locus of harm and benefit, we may add a third principle: the condition of the soul is of a value that is incomparable to the value of the condition of the body or of one's material possessions. As we shall see, it is difficult to determine with certainty whether the intended

[24] The tripartite division of goods into goods of the soul, goods of the body, and possessions is common throughout Greek thought. "Material possessions" or "material goods" ought to be understood broadly so as to contain not only wealth and property, but good fortune, noble birth, and excellent reputation.

[25] Scholars have argued that the character traits of a person were thought of as identical to what one looked like, what one had, and what one's visible actions were. Someone who was a king, and therefore excellent and virtuous by birth, *appeared* excellent; one could see his excellence by looking at his body, his chariots, his house, and his dress. The character of Socrates, as well as the sophists, destabilizes this easy reading of real character from surface appearance. Plato presents Socrates as the ugly surface appearance which masks an "inner" incomparable beauty (see Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* [215b ff.]).

superior value of the state of one's soul is quantitative, qualitative, or both. A person might well ask, "Is no amount of physical well-being or gain in material circumstances worth even the slightest harm to one's soul?" Throughout the book I argue that such a question is misguided according to the ethics of Plato. The key is to appreciate the distinction between aiming and determining, and to avoid what I called above "moralizing." Moralizing takes for granted what *is* right or wrong, virtuous or vicious; that is, moralizing preemptively takes the determining question to be settled. Thus, for example, acting destructively towards the state or bribing guards is thought to be obviously wrong. Then one can easily wonder, "What if I act in a way that is only *slightly* destructive of the state, but preserves my life, which is unjustly in jeopardy?" This is typically taken as a challenge to SV, to Socrates' principle that it is never right to do wrong. On my view, however, Socrates and Plato do not consider any actions described in purely non-evaluative terms as virtuous or vicious in themselves. As long as one's aim is to do the virtuous action (or to not do what is contrary to virtue) and not, say, to maximize one's wealth, it may turn out in some set of circumstances, for example, that it is virtuous to tell a falsehood in order to acquire some possessions.

The fourth principle that I argue runs through Plato, with varying degrees of explicitness, I label "the habituation principle." According to the habituation principle, engaging in actions of a certain ethical type contributes to the formation and maintenance of a character of the corresponding type. The habituation principle is often expressed in conjunction with examples from health or beauty. As certain types of exercise and physical activity contribute to the formation and maintenance of beautiful and healthy bodies, so performance of certain types of actions, for example, virtuous actions, contributes to the formation and maintenance of a virtuous character. This principle holds for both positive and negative types of habituation.

The habituation principle explains why the type of actions one engages in has such importance. Each action is not only the action that it is, but also, at the same time, contributes to making a person the type of person she is. There is no possibility of engaging in an action in such a way that it does not "mark" one's soul and does not contribute to the formation of one's character, either for better or worse. The habituation principle is a well-known component of Aristotle's ethics. In *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.1, the *locus classicus* for this concept, Aristotle relies on it to explain how we acquire the so-called "virtues of character." How habituation works in Aristotle, and its role in the formation of the fully virtuous character, have received much attention in recent scholarship. But the extent to which the habituation

principle is present in Plato as well and the critical role it plays there have not been adequately recognized. We should note here that the habituation principle underscores the significance of the distinction between aiming and determining questions. Given the truth of the habituation principle, it is essential to determine correctly which actions are virtuous and which are not. Without the ability to determine which actions are correct, one will not be able to acquire the proper state of soul, so the incomparably most valuable part of oneself will not be benefited.

The last principle that I shall mention is that which actions are virtuous and which are not is an objective fact, not dependent on humans' or gods' attitudes about what is virtuous. This is important, and conditions Plato's arguments against hedonism and conventionalism. It makes determining questions urgent: what is true virtue and vice? If the good is pleasure or the right is established by convention, then it is relatively simple to determine what is good or right in some circumstances by determining what gratifies one's appetite or what the laws of a city command. The virtuous action would be the action that maximizes one's pleasure or the one that does not break any societal agreements. We shall see this issue arise in chapters three, four, five, and eight. If hedonism or conventionalism is rejected, as it is by Plato, we are deprived of a simple way of settling determining questions and are thrown back to Socrates' nagging question: what *is* virtue after all?

6 A NOTE ON READING PLATO (I): THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIALOGUE FORM

As readers of this book are well aware, the contemporary study of Plato employs a wide variety of methodological approaches. The reasons for this are many and complex, involving not only features of Plato's writing and the time in which he wrote, but also developments in contemporary philosophy and even literary theory. One clear reason, however, that there are so many more widely divergent approaches to (and not simply differing interpretations of) Plato than, say, to Aristotle, Aquinas, or Leibniz, is doubtless the unvarying way that Plato writes philosophy: in dialogue form and without ever including himself as a speaking character.[26]

[26] Excepting, if genuine, any letters. This makes Plato rare, but not unique, among philosophers in the Western tradition. Nietzsche and Wittgenstein are two notorious examples of philosophers whose way of writing philosophy provokes not only differing interpretations (as any philosophical writing will) but profoundly differing approaches to the writing itself, frequently breaking the canonical disciplinary boundaries. If you do not include occasional borrowings of theory or conceptual distinctions from philosophy (such as conclusions from twentieth-century philosophy of

Arguments about the proper approach to Plato often center around the question, "Why did Plato write dialogues?" I am not sure, however, that this is a particularly useful question to focus on, even if it is an obvious one to ask,[27] in part because I am skeptical that there is any interesting substantive answer to it. I agree that most of the explanations typically offered are at least part of the story about why Plato chose to write philosophy in this way: to some largely unknowable extent, it imitates the way the historical Socrates actually conducted philosophical discussion, and the historical Socrates had an enormous influence on Plato; it enables Plato to distance himself from any conclusions reached by the interlocutors and he does this because of a hesitation to present some view as the final truth of the matter; Plato believed that in some way philosophical truth could not be communicated fully or directly (whatever that means exactly) in writing; "the Socratic dialogue" was a genre that was popular at the time Plato wrote, engaged in by many who had close contact with Socrates. Most probably all of these explanations of why Plato wrote dialogues, as well as others, are at least partly accurate. But I remain unpersuaded by more detailed accounts or elaborations of these ideas insofar as they seek to find some key that would make the "problem" of the dialogue form dissolve, typically either by implausibly diminishing or implausibly augmenting its significance. No one can deny that the dialogue form creates a certain distance between author and reader that is not present in a treatise. In that distance questions arise about irony, the author's real intent, whether he identifies with any character, and if so, which, and so on. But is there any way, at more than a speculative level, to say that Plato definitely did not hold the views expressed by an interlocutor at some point, or any way to say that he definitely did? To a significant degree these are questions about Plato's intentions, and, even if we are interested in answering them, the dialogue form simply precludes our knowing them.

I think we may make more headway if we begin from the manifest fact that Plato *did* write dialogues, whatever his reason(s) for doing so, and consider the consequences of that. The effect of writing a dialogue is to create a distinction between what I call the "inner" and the "outer" frames of the dialogue.[28] The outer frame refers to the relationship between the text and the reader. To be conscious of the outer frame is to remember and reflect on the fact that every dialogue, and every speech of every character

language borrowed by some types of literary theory), most philosophers are written on only by other philosophers; this is not so for Plato, Nietzsche, or Wittgenstein.

[27] And of course needs to be addressed in any introductory course or work on Plato.

[28] I first discussed this distinction in Vasiliou (1999a).

within a dialogue, is written by Plato. We should remember that there is no evidence that Plato ever circulated his dialogues anonymously. Everyone who read (or heard) the *Gorgias* was well aware that it was written by Plato, the man who ran a well-known school in Athens for some decades. The inner frame refers to the relationship between interlocutors within the dialogue.[29] Rather than attempting to say in general why Plato wrote dialogues, I shall consider the text from the perspectives of both the inner and the outer frames. It is not the case, however, that each of these perspectives is always equally important. At times in Plato the significance of the outer frame may be limited to the weak claims I listed above about why Plato wrote dialogues at all – perhaps, for example, in the *Laws*. Other times, in the *Symposium*, *Laches*, *Gorgias* or *Protagoras*, reflection on the outer frame may be extremely important exegetically. In yet other works, the fruitfulness of reflecting on the outer frame may be moderate. I have very little to say a priori about the significance of the distinction without showing its value in particular cases; and I believe it does not always have the same value in all dialogues.

Thus I do not always raise the distinction between the inner and outer frames. I sometimes go into considerable detail about the dramatic context and focus on the way interlocutors argue, spending less time on the analysis of arguments themselves. In other places I focus in great detail on an argument, while ignoring elements of the drama and style. What dictates these choices is my goal of explicating and elucidating what I shall argue is the central role of the distinction between aiming and determining questions. This is what drives the study, not some a priori belief about the relative importance of the "philosophical" as opposed to the "dramatic" elements of the dialogues.

7 A NOTE ON READING PLATO (II): DOCTRINES AND DEVELOPMENTALISM

I shall also say something brief about Plato, doctrines, and philosophical development. Like the general question about why Plato wrote dialogues, I also do not find the question of whether Plato held doctrines especially useful. It is clear that views are put forward and defended in the dialogues. It is clear too that many of these views are complex, defended by long and intricate arguments, and approached from different angles in more

[29] Of course, sometimes there are nested inner frames; the *Symposium* is a quite complex example of nested inner frames (four).

than one dialogue. Regardless even of what Plato himself might have said about his own epistemic relationship to these views – whether he would regard himself as knowing them, believing them, entertaining them, or whatever – it is clear at least that the dialogues take certain views very seriously. We find elaborate views defended in detail, typically by Socrates, but sometimes by other interlocutors, in the dialogues. As with the question about the dialogue form, there are various generalizations that I would find it difficult to dispute, at a sufficient level of generality: Plato held some views that bore a close relationship to those held by the main interlocutor in many dialogues; his views underwent some development or change in the course of more than forty years of philosophical work; there is some moving away from the figure (and influence) of Socrates in his latest works, exemplified by the unpublished *Laws*, which we know Plato was working on at the end of his life and which alone does not contain a character "Socrates."

While I do believe that all of these claims contain elements of truth, I do not think that one can put much flesh on these bones with any degree of certainty. All we can do is interpret the dialogues individually and in comparison with one another, asking questions about both the inner and outer frames where appropriate, and applying the principle of charity with as much self-consciousness about our own philosophical views as we can. I maintain that particular conclusions about development or changes in views over the course of the dialogues can only be the product of the detailed study of them and that we must be careful not to employ an argument that begins from the assumption that a dialogue belongs to a certain period and so therefore must be presenting certain views. This book is unitarian in spirit insofar as it argues for an elaboration of the same concepts and distinctions throughout the dialogues discussed.[30] I do not deny that on some other topics there may be clearly distinct and conflicting views in different dialogues, which may plausibly suggest some sort of development. I shall argue that the defense of SV, and the distinction between it and determining what virtue is, is developed most intricately and thoroughly in the *Republic*. As a device of convenience I shall refer to the other dialogues I discuss as "earlier." I do not, however, intend this to imply anything about the chronological date in which a dialogue was written nor do I claim that the order of my discussion matches an order in Plato's own philosophical development.

[30] Annas (1999), ch. 1, emphasizes the relative recentness of developmentalist readings of Plato.

CHAPTER 1

Socrates and the supremacy of virtue

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Even a casual reader of the *Apology* understands that Socrates believes that virtue is more important than anything else, even his own life. What has not been recognized, or at least not accorded any significance, is that for Socrates virtue is an *aim*. He believes that you should never aim simply at saving your life at the expense of aiming at what is virtuous; in other words, your life counts for nothing *as an aim* when compared with virtue *as an aim*. But "the supremacy of virtue" does not imply the quite implausible view that many readers apparently attribute to Socrates, that one's loss of life is not relevant to the deliberation about what is in fact the virtuous action in some circumstances; that is, the view that one's life counts for nothing in a different sense. It is not as though one could determine what the virtuous action is independently of considerations of life, death, pleasure, pain, or material loss or gain. Socrates is not saying that we should ignore these things absolutely. Any fact described in non-evaluative terms may in principle be relevant in a deliberation that seeks to determine what the virtuous action is here and now.[1] Certainly factors like pleasure and pain, life and death, wealth, and the welfare of friends and family will be most relevant to such deliberations. We must ignore such things, however, as *aims of action* when they conflict with what virtue requires.

I shall argue that while Socrates believes that one ought always to adhere to SV, it may well be that in some cases material benefits gained or lost is a relevant factor in the *determination* of what the excellent action *is* here and now. To deny this would be to deny the relevance of, for example, a person's

[1] Although this sounds like a particularist position, it is not necessarily so. It could be the case that there are universal principles that could be made concrete enough to cover any possible case; or, perhaps more plausibly, there may be "prima facie" Rossian-type generalizations.

losing all of her property in an assessment of what is right. It is true that in Socratic deliberation the simple fact that an action involves killing someone or depriving them of property does not, by virtue of that fact alone, render it wrong or vicious.[2] Moreover, one's *aim* cannot be simply to save lives; one's actions must always be regulated by SV. But whether someone will be killed or not *is* certainly relevant in assessing whether an action is virtuous or not. Socrates is not depicted as intuiting through some magical insight what the right thing to do is, without considering the mundane features of life that we all ordinarily consider.[3] What is distinctive about Socrates' deliberation is not that he *ignores* such factors, but that he always takes them into consideration regulated by SV either as his explicit aim or as a limiting condition.[4] This argument will not be complete until the end of chapter two.

Here in chapter one I shall begin with the *Apology*, and show that both the way Socrates states SV and the argument within the speech itself indicates that SV ought to be understood as an aiming principle, which operates in action both as an explicit aim and limiting condition. Appreciating the significance of the concept of an aim will lead to new readings of some familiar texts, and a new understanding of Socrates' avowals and disavowals of knowledge. Scholars have not noticed that, except for the final argument in the *Crito* (50a ff.) and the way he conducts himself at trial, Socrates never argues that anything he has done, or is doing, is in fact virtuous.[5] Rather he argues simply that, whenever virtue was at issue, he has always unfailingly *aimed* at doing the virtuous thing or avoiding the vicious action. *Whether* the actions he has engaged in – for example, fighting in various battles or refusing to help to bring in Leon for prosecution – *were in fact* virtuous he does not argue one way or the other. Of course he *believes* they were, but he provides no argument for this. Without exception his point is that on all such occasions he has acted in accord with SV.

[2] "Vicious" is used as the antonym to "virtuous," not in the colloquial sense.

[3] With the exception of his divine sign, which I discuss further below and in chapter two.

[4] See Introduction, section 1, for discussion of the terms "explicit aim" and "limiting condition." As we shall see in chapter two, in the argument of "the Laws" in the *Crito* (50a–54d), Socrates considers the effects of possible exile, his age, the prospects of future care of his children, and the welfare of his friends in his deliberation about whether to escape from prison.

[5] Lane (1998), 313 ff., recognizes a related point that Socrates in the *Crito* engages in what she calls "deliberation": that is, attempts to determine what to do in a particular practical situation. Contrary to Lane, however, I do not think that the *Crito* is the only place Socrates faces such a situation, although it is the most prominent. Both his decision to engage in certain conversations (although this is arguably a different sort of situation) and also his decision to conduct his trial speech in the manner he does are additional examples. See chapter two.

1.2 THE SUPREMACY OF VIRTUE IN THE *APOLOGY*

In the *Apology* Socrates provides no explicit argument for the claim that people should follow SV, but a substantial portion of the speech does consist of an argument to show that he himself has unwaveringly adhered to it. *If* Socrates is a persuasive advocate of SV in this setting, it is not because of any argument he puts forward, but because he stands as an inspirational example of commitment to it for a listener who already believes in it.

Let's consider Socrates' first statement of SV:

> Perhaps someone might say: "Aren't you ashamed that you have pursued the sort of pursuit on account of which you are now likely to be put to death?" But I would reply to this with a just statement [δίκαιον λόγον], "You are not right, sir, if you think that a man who is worth even some little bit ought to take under consideration the risk of living or dying and not instead look to this alone when he acts: whether he is doing just or unjust things, the deeds of a good or a bad man." (28b5–9)

This is an aiming principle in the clearest sense: Socrates says that a man should "look alone" (μόνον σκοπεῖν) at whether he is acting virtuously or not. A person's *goal* ought to be to realize just actions, the deeds of a good man.[6] Here Socrates refers to SV as an explicit aim. He tells us that, in deciding what to do, there is one goal in action that necessarily trumps all others: virtue. It ought to override any other value one might be inclined to offer as the aim of one's action, such as survival, wealth, pleasure, good reputation, and so on. SV does not help an agent, however, to *determine* what to do or not do in any particular situation. In the passage the imaginary interlocutor supposes that a life that results in a premature death at the hands of others must be a life led in the wrong way.[7] SV denies this by claiming that acting virtuously trumps any other aims one might have in action, including staying alive. We should be clear that it is not offering an all-inclusive account that says that we should always act aiming at virtue. Rather, the context of the conversation with the imaginary interlocutor makes clear that the principle SV applies only in certain situations: whenever there is a virtuous action to be done (or a vicious action to be avoided), then one ought not to consider anything else as providing a competing aim for one's action. It reasonably leaves open that in some, perhaps many, situations where an action's being virtuous or not is not at issue, one may pursue

[6] The virtuous action, the fine or noble action, the just action, and the good action are all synonymous.

[7] We shall see in 3.6 that Callicles in the *Gorgias* is an interlocutor who raises just such an objection to Socrates, in strikingly similar language.

some other aim. This is prohibited only in situations in which another aim runs contrary to virtue.

Socrates follows this passage with an example from the *Iliad*. Achilles made his decision to remain (and so to die) at Troy rather than to return home solely on the basis (according to Socrates anyway) of what Achilles thought was the excellent thing to do. It is critical to notice that the point of his example is *not* that what Achilles *actually did* was right – it may or may not have been, and he does not argue *that* substantive question one way or the other. The important issue for Socrates is that Achilles had only one aim in his deliberation: to do the virtuous action. When doing the virtuous thing was at issue, Achilles gave no thought to "death and danger" (θανάτου καὶ κινδύνου) (28c9, 28d4–5); he feared only "living as a bad man" (δείσας τὸ ζῆν κακὸς ὢν, 28d1). Socrates claims, then, that Achilles shared his commitment to the aiming principle SV, but he does not affirm that what Achilles actually did was correct.[8] One might argue that what Achilles took to constitute excellence in his situation was incorrect; perhaps he should have given up the false glories of the Homeric hero, and instead returned home and worked for the less fortunate. Socrates' praise of Achilles leaves this question entirely open, and the claim that Achilles adhered to SV does not affect it.

Consider another passage:

For in truth, men of Athens, things are this way: where someone positions oneself, believing that it is best [βέλτιστον], or having been placed there by his commander [ὑπ' ἄρχοντος], he must [δεῖ] remain there, as it seems to me, and face danger, not considering either death or anything else in place of the disgraceful [πρὸ τοῦ αἰσχροῦ]. (28d6–10)

"The disgraceful" here is clearly meant to be contrasted with "the noble" (τὸ καλόν) (cf. *Cr.* 47c9–10). Again Socrates states that avoiding death is nothing *as an aim for action* when contrasted with excellence and its opposite. He goes on to illustrate his adherence to SV by citing his actions at the battles of Potidaea, Amphipolis, and Delium. As above, the point of the examples is not that these specific actions *actually were* the right ones, but that he acted in the way he thought required by virtue even in the face of death; he made his decisions solely on the basis of whether the action was right or wrong. A pacifist might take issue with Socrates' participation in these battles, and try to argue that he was in fact acting wrongly. As I understand him, Socrates would have welcomed such an argument and, as we shall see below, would have acknowledged that he might have actually

[8] Weiss (1998), 8–9, has a different reading.

done wrong. In order to settle such an issue, however, he and his interlocutor would first have to know what virtue *is*.[9] So Socrates may have in fact done wrong, while never wavering from his commitment to SV.[10]

One more passage:

> To do wrong [ἀδικεῖν] and to disobey one's better [βελτίονι], whether man or god, this I know [οἶδα] is bad and disgraceful [κακὸν καὶ αἰσχρόν]. (29b6–7)

This statement emphasizes SV's role as a limiting condition. For Socrates, it is clear that one's better must be one's moral superior – not someone who is wealthier, or holds higher political office, or is better at shoemaking.[11] This formulation of SV, which is so central to the *Crito* (cf. 49a–e), expresses its ubiquitous role as a limiting condition. Although one may have many aims in action other than virtue, those aims must always be limited by the condition that one's aim is not contrary to virtue, does not constitute "doing wrong."

Socrates proceeds to argue, as before, that he himself has always adhered to SV by citing his experience on the Council (32a ff.) and his refusal during the rule of the Thirty to bring in Leon of Salamis (32c). It is again no part of Socrates' argument here that *what* he did was right; a particular Athenian might take issue with that, and it would need to be argued about separately. It is not, surely, that Socrates thinks that what he did was wrong; he thinks it was right, and expects his audience to agree. But his point in discussing these events is not about this question one way or the other. Rather, Socrates emphasizes that the sole aim he allowed to guide his deliberations was whether he was avoiding wrongdoing:

> [I was ordered to bring in Leon], however I showed again at that time, not in word but in deed [οὐ λόγῳ ἀλλ' ἔργῳ], that I consider death (if it were not too wild to say) to be nothing whatsoever, but not doing anything unjust or impious, *this* I consider to be everything [τὸ πᾶν]. (32c8–d3)

[9] See chapter four.

[10] We shall see below how this affects our understanding of Socrates and incontinence.

[11] See Kraut (1984), 23, n. 38. Reeve (1989), 110–12, disagrees. He claims that Socrates includes his actual commanders in the battles of Potidaea, Amphipolis, and Delium as "his superiors in the requisite sense," despite the fact that Socrates would hardly consider them his moral superiors. Reeve argues that for a person assigned to a post it is reasonable to believe that "[. . .] his commander is in the relevant sense his better. For unless there is strong evidence to the contrary, X's [the person's] commander must be presumed to be in a better position to know what it is best for him to do on the battlefield or its analogue, the Athenian polis, than X is himself. But . . . the only contrary evidence X has is that staying at his post puts him at risk of dying. And that . . . has insufficient weight to justify disobedience. Thus (2) [the above passage, 29b6–7] explains why disobeying a commander is bad, wrong, and shameful." (112). But when Reeve says that "unless there is strong evidence to the contrary, X's commander must be presumed to be in a better position" he almost begs the question: if the commander *is* in a better position to see what virtue truly requires, then he is morally superior at least in that context. The qualifying clause about strong evidence leaves open the possibility of justified disobedience. Thus Socrates does not obey his official commander simply qua commander.

Socrates focuses again on how SV governs all of his deliberations. The deliberations themselves we are not privy to, but he boldly states his adherence to SV. His argument implies that if he has never let staying alive count as a competing aim against doing what is virtuous in the past, a fortiori he would never allow aims such as health, wealth, or reputation (all the things he has complained the Athenians falsely take to be the most important things [29d ff.]) to override the aim of acting virtuously and being sure never to act viciously. As we shall see, I am not attributing to Socrates the view that factors like wealth, life, health, reputation, and so on might not fairly count as one's aim under certain circumstances, nor that such factors certainly might be relevant in the substantive deliberation involved in determining what is here and now the right thing to do.[12] SV is simply the claim that *when* a question of right or wrong is at issue (something not the case in every action in one's life) a virtuous action is the supreme and explicit aim an agent should have, and that in all other actions one must be sure they are never contrary to virtue.

1.3 SOCRATES AND MORAL KNOWLEDGE

One striking feature of Socrates' statement of SV in the *Apology* is that it is something he explicitly claims to *know*. Gregory Vlastos has made the passage from 29b (quoted above) famous as an example of an explicit avowal of ethical knowledge.[13] Crucially, however, Socrates avows not just any ethical knowledge, but specifically knowledge of an *aiming principle*, knowledge of SV. Appreciating the distinction between SV and the ethical knowledge that would be constituted by correct answers to Socrates' "What is F?" questions (that is, knowledge that would actually determine what virtue is) suggests a new way of understanding Socrates' disavowal of knowledge. Commentators have offered a variety of explanations of how the disavowal can be seriously meant.[14] An adequate account must explain the apparent contradiction between a Socrates who most often claims *not* to know, and one who also sometimes claims *to* know.[15]

[12] See chapter two. [13] See his (1985/1994), 43 ff.

[14] The literature on Socrates' disavowal is vast, and I cannot comprehensively survey it here. But, in addition to discussion below, see Irwin (1977); Lesher (1987); Vlastos (1985/1994); Brickhouse and Smith (1994), ch. 2; Irwin (1995), §§16–18; Nozick (1995), and the reply by Fine (1996); Stokes (1997), 17–21; Benson (2000); Wolfsdorf (2004).

[15] Vlastos (1985/1994) proposes that Socrates must be working with two types of knowledge: elenctic knowledge and certain knowledge. For criticisms of Vlastos' view see Lesher (1987); Irwin (1992); Brickhouse and Smith (1993); Nehamas (1998), ch. 3. Both Irwin (1995), §17, and Benson (2000), ch. 10, esp. 236–8, attempt to downplay the significance of the avowal passages. Irwin believes that Socrates maintains only that he has true belief, not knowledge. Wolfsdorf (2004), esp. 124, 132, rejects the idea that a consistent reading ought to be found.

Rather than focusing, as most accounts do, on differences in the *cognitive state* of Socrates as a way of understanding the disavowal, I shall look at the *objects* of Socrates' knowledge and lack of knowledge.[16] There is no puzzle if Socrates disavows knowledge of *x*, but avows knowledge of *y*; attempting to distinguish the cognitive states of Socrates is only necessary if we think that Socrates is avowing and disavowing knowledge of the same thing (at the same time). But if we look at the passages where Socrates avows and disavows knowledge, and the contexts of those passages, we find that he consistently avows knowledge of SV, but consistently disavows knowledge of the answers to the "What is F?" question about virtue. An adequate answer to the "What is F?" question is the criterion that Socrates demands for claiming to know what F is, and it is this he does not have.[17] But that does not stop him from knowing SV, and therefore being unwaveringly confident in living according to it.[18]

1.3.1 Socrates' disavowals of knowledge

I shall take the first appearance of the disavowal in the *Apology* as a paradigm for how to understand it elsewhere. At 19d8 Socrates defends himself against a charge of "making the worse argument appear to be the better" levied by the "earlier accusers" which, in effect, accuses him of being a sophist. Socrates denies that he undertakes to teach anyone or that he charges any money for it. He ironically praises the sophists "since it seems to me to be noble (καλόν), *if* someone is able to educate (παιδεύειν) people, just like Gorgias of Leontini, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis."[19] Socrates

[16] Lesher (1987) is an exception. He believes that Socrates disavows knowledge of "essential natures" (286) of the virtues, but that he avows knowledge of "the moral qualities of specific actions" (285) and that he "confidently identif[ies] the goods and evils of daily life" (287). Lesher further believes that "identifying the goods and evils of ordinary life was in short as philosophically uncontroversial as it was uninteresting" (287). Alcibiades expresses such a view on behalf of the Athenians in *Alcibiades 1* (113d), but I see no evidence that it is Socrates' or Plato's. I think that Socrates does certainly disavow knowledge of the "essential natures" of virtue, but that he therefore also disavows knowing which token actions are virtuous or not (barring aid from his divine sign). Indeed I am arguing throughout that the puzzle of how to resolve "determining questions" knowledgeably is one of the primary concerns of the dialogues.

[17] We shall consider Socrates' "What is F?" question further in chapter four.

[18] Another obstacle is the conflict between Socrates' claiming knowledge of any sort and his alleged belief in the "priority of definition," which maintains that if one does not know what F is, then neither can one know anything about F. After I discuss the textual evidence that Socrates does indeed avow knowledge of SV, while disavowing knowledge of what virtue is, I shall address how this can be reconciled. See 1.4.

[19] This is a case of what I call "conditional irony"; see Vasiliou (1999a). In conditional irony Socrates literally means the conditional as a whole. The reader, however, has good reason to think that Socrates does not believe that the condition stated in the antecedent actually obtains, and so good

then describes how he asked Callias whether there is someone who is a "knower" (ἐπιστήμων) of human excellence to whom he can send his sons to become "fine and good," on analogy with an expert horse-breeder who makes horses excellent. Callias tells him that Evenus is such a person and Socrates responds with the first disavowal:

> And I considered Evenus blessed, *if* he has this skill [τέχνη] and teaches it for such a reasonable amount.[20] I at any rate would also preen and pride myself if I knew these things; but I do not know [them], men of Athens. (20c1–3)

Here the knowledge that is attributed to Evenus is explicitly techne-knowledge[21] of virtue, that is, expert knowledge of what virtue is. This is the knowledge that Socrates so frequently tests for in other dialogues – for example, in the *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Laches*, *Meno*, and *Protagoras* – and this is the knowledge he disavows. As Socrates says at *Meno* 71c and as all of these dialogues show, the inability of anyone to answer the "What is F?" question indicates that no one actually has expert knowledge of virtue. As I shall discuss further in chapter four, if someone had this knowledge, then he would of course have a foolproof way of *determining* which actions are virtuous and which are not.

After hearing that the oracle claimed that no one was wiser than he, Socrates explains the source of his puzzlement:

> For I am conscious of not being wise in anything great or small (οὔτε μέγα οὔτε σμικρὸν σύνοιδα) (21b4–5).

In the context of Socrates' account of his examination of the politicians, poets, and craftsmen that follows, it becomes clear that "great or small" refers to the upcoming contrast between the craftsmen's knowledge of their crafts and their subsequent misplaced conceit that they also know "other most important things ['greatest,' μέγιστα]" (22d6–e1).[22] The theme

reason to think that Socrates does not really believe the consequent either. Of course, this does not follow logically; one cannot validly conclude "not-q" from "if p, then q," and "not-p." Nevertheless in ordinary conversation when a person says, "If you φ, I'll ψ," there is the implication that if you *don't* φ, then I *won't* ψ. The frequency of this sort of example in conversation is surely part of the reason why people are so liable to commit the fallacy.

[20] An example of conditional irony once again.

[21] I will frequently leave τέχνη simply transliterated as "techne" (without long marks). It is typically translated "art," "skill," or "craft" and can refer to the skill or craft itself (e.g. shoemaking) and also to the expert knowledge that the craftsman possesses.

[22] Vlastos (1985/1994), 43, n. 12 (see also his [1991], 238) claims that the "clear import" of 21b4–5 is that Socrates knows "absolutely nothing." To the extent that this suggests that Socrates claims not to know that his name is "Socrates," how to get to Piraeus, or that two plus two equals four and so on, it is nowhere warranted in the dialogues. See Brickhouse and Smith (1994), 34–5, and Wolfsdorf (2004), 129, for more tempered assessments.

of the "most important things" is repeated at 29e–30b, and refers to the best possible state of one's soul, that is, virtue. By contrast, knowledge of something "small" or "unimportant" would be the knowledge of an ordinary techne, which Socrates says that the craftsmen, as opposed to the poets and politicians, actually do have (22d1–4). In this passage, then, Socrates disavows knowledge of any techne, and knowledge of virtue. He has met people, the craftsmen, who possess knowledge of their crafts, but has never met anyone with techne-knowledge of virtue.[23]

In every other passage in which Socrates expresses his disavowal of knowledge, it is always clear that *what* he is disavowing knowledge of is knowledge of what virtue is. Let us consider some examples, beginning with the *Laches*:

> I say first about myself, Lysimachos and Melisias, that I have not had a teacher in this [in making a person's soul best], although I desired such a thing from the beginning of my youth. But I did not have the money for sophists, who alone claimed to be able to make me fine and noble; but I myself am unable to discover [this] craft [τέχνη] even now . . . [I urge you, Lysimachos, not to let Laches or Nicias go but to question them] saying that Socrates denies that he knows [ἐπαΐειν] about this matter nor is he capable of determining which of you speaks the truth – for he has been neither a discoverer nor a student of anything about such things . . . (186b8–c5 . . . 186d8–e2)

Laches and Nicias are willing to speak about what would be best for Lysimachos' and Melesias' sons, thereby implying that they have knowledge about what is best for them.[24] By contrast, Socrates denies having any knowledge of a techne of virtue just as he did in the *Apology*. Again at the end of the *Laches* (200e2–5) Socrates refuses the role of teacher, since to teach one must first have knowledge, and insists instead that they continue the search together and not remain as they are. Likewise in the *Charmides*, Socrates disavows having knowledge of what temperance is (165b4–c2) and suggests, when Critias becomes annoyed, that Socrates is refuting Critias more for Socrates' own sake than for Critias', in order to be sure that he does not end up thinking he knows something he does not know (166c7–d6).

In the *Protagoras* Socrates sums up his long and complex discussion with Protagoras as follows:

[23] Although this is the knowledge that Socrates claims that the sophists believe they have: see, e.g., *Ap*. 20d9–e2 and *La*. 186c2–4.

[24] See Vasiliou (1999a), §6, for the conceit of knowledge by Laches and Nicias, and Socrates' use of conditional irony to speak to them.

I ask about all these things for no other reason than my wishing to inquire into [σκέψασθαι] how in the world matters concerning virtue stand [πῶς ποτ᾽ ἔχει τὰ περὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς] and what in the world virtue itself is [τί ποτ᾽ ἐστὶν αὐτό]. For I know [οἶδα] that if this became apparent that [issue] about which each of us has said so much would become perfectly clear, I maintaining that virtue is not teachable and you that it is. (360e6–361a3)

Socrates here insists that his confusion is again about what virtue is. We should note that he explicitly avows knowledge about the connection, itself quite uncontroversial, between knowing what F is and knowing what F is like.[25] This stands as an example of an "ordinary" avowal; it is not about ethics as such, nor is it the avowal of any techne-knowledge. It is simply the claim that, if we were to know what virtue is, we would then know whether it was teachable. This shows further that Socrates' disavowal of things "great and small" in the *Apology* (21b4–5) should not be understood as a disavowal of all knowledge.

The pattern of disavowing the answer to the "What is F?" question when posed about virtue or a virtue continues in every other passage containing a disavowal: Socrates disavows knowing what piety is at *Euthyphro* 5a7–c5, 15c12, and 15e–16a; he denies knowing what the fine is at *Hippias Major* 286d–e2 and 304d–e; what virtue is at *Meno* 71a–c and 80d; what justice is at *Republic* I, 337e.[26] Every time Socrates disavows knowledge he is disavowing knowledge of what virtue or a virtue is, that is, he disavows being able to answer the "What is F?" question for virtue or a virtue. There remains one important disavowal passage – *Gorgias* 509a4–6 – that I have not yet considered. Before we can understand it properly, however, we need to look at Socrates' avowals of ethical knowledge, where he appears to avow knowledge about the "most important" things inconsistently with his many disavowals. I shall argue that this conflict is merely apparent, for we shall see that what Socrates avows knowledge *of* – the supremacy of virtue – is quite different from what he has disavowed knowledge of – namely the

[25] Note that what Socrates says in this passage is that, if they know what virtue is, then they will know whether it is teachable. This is a significantly weaker claim than the priority of definition, which maintains that if one doesn't know what F is, then one can't know what F is like. This passage thus doesn't preclude the possibility of knowing something about what F is like without knowing what F is.

[26] This pattern holds also for the midwifery passage in the *Theaetetus* (148e–151d), where Socrates disavows knowledge of what knowledge itself is, and claims to be able only to test the ideas of Theaetetus. As we shall see in 7.4 and 8.4, it extends as well into the *Republic* when Socrates disavows knowledge of the Form of the Good.

answers to "What is F?" questions about the virtues, which would enable him to determine which token actions are virtuous.

1.3.2 Socrates' avowals of moral knowledge

Socrates' most explicit and stark avowals of moral knowledge appear in the *Apology*, during his statement of SV and his subsequent discussion of its effects on his life in the past, and its consequences for his current behavior at the trial.[27] The first passage we have seen already:

> To do wrong [ἀδικεῖν] and to disobey one's better, whether man or god, this I know [οἶδα] is bad and disgraceful.[28] (29b6–7)

This is the famous avowal on which Vlastos focuses so much attention. What is being avowed is not knowledge about what virtue or a virtue is (either in general or in some concrete instance), but knowledge of SV. Immediately afterwards Socrates avows knowledge again:

> I will never fear or flee from things about which I do not know whether they might be good, rather than from bad things which I know [οἶδα] are bad [κακά]. (29b7–9)

The "bad things," which Socrates knows are bad, are doing unjust actions. There is an implied connection here: it is bad to do wrong, and by SV acting contrary to virtue is wrong.[29] One might not concede this without argument. What is good or bad for someone to do is associated with what harms or benefits a person. Someone might easily admit that doing injustice is wrong, without thereby believing that it is bad.[30] It will be clear in what follows that Socrates believes that one harms oneself by doing unjust actions.

[27] There are many passages in which Socrates explicitly says he "knows" things; see passages and references cited by Benson (2000), 223–6. As noted above, unless one believes that Socrates disavows knowledge quite generally, these "ordinary" avowals should come as no surprise (for example, at *Pr.* 339b5 Socrates says that Protagoras does not need to recite Simonides' poem, because he knows [ἐπίσταμαι] it). What primarily leads scholars to attribute to Socrates the disavowal of *all* knowledge is a very broad interpretation of the priority of definition such that one cannot know anything about F or that any token is F without knowing what F is, that is, without being able to answer the Socratic "What is F?" question. Benson (2000), 226–7, shows that even if one takes this stand, Socrates could still know many ordinary things. For our purposes, however, what is significant is the nature of the *moral* knowledge that Socrates avows.

[28] See also 28b5–9, where he calls SV a just account (δίκαιος λόγος), and especially 28d6–10, where he says that never putting any aim above avoiding disgrace is "in truth [τῇ ἀληθείᾳ]" how matters stand.

[29] Wolfsdorf (2004), 132 concedes that these avowals strictly speaking conflict with Socrates' disavowals of ethical knowledge and with the priority of definition (see below, 1.4), but he claims that these inconsistencies "would not have bothered Plato and so are hermeneutically innocuous."

[30] Polus in the *Gorgias* maintains just this view; see 3.4.

This is why Meletus and Anytus cannot harm him in the most important way, even if they kill or disfranchise him, and why they do themselves much greater harm insofar as they are engaged in the unjust action of prosecuting Socrates (*Ap*. 30d). It is in this sense as well that Socrates is "defending" the jury, who are, once again, at risk of doing themselves great harm by doing an injustice in convicting Socrates. Of course this will strike the ordinary hearer as absurd and outlandish, and Socrates does not defend his claim in the *Apology*.[31] But we shall see that in the *Crito* (in chapter two), *Gorgias* (in chapter three), and *Republic* (in chapters six, seven, and eight), the claim that a person is a combination of body and soul, each of which may be harmed or benefited independently of the other, is made with increasing detail and sophistication. The soul is of vastly superior value to the body and excellent actions make the soul excellent, while vicious actions make the soul vicious. Thus the former benefit (i.e. are good for) the soul, while the latter harm (i.e. are bad for) it.

To flee death (whose nature Socrates does not know), then, by pursuing unjust actions (which he *knows* are wrong) is clearly prohibited. I shall reiterate that what Socrates *knows* is wrong is to do unjust actions. In this passage he is taking that description for granted. By contrast he never claims to know that certain types of actions (described in non-evaluative terms) or certain token actions are or are not unjust (barring, as always, the intervention of his divine sign).

Socrates displays similar reasoning during the penalty phase of the trial, while he is deliberating about what penalty he should assess for himself. Given that he has been found guilty and that his accusers have proposed death, an ordinary person in such a situation would propose a penalty severe enough that the jury might accept it in lieu of death. Socrates, by contrast, takes the opportunity to show then and there that he always adheres to SV and so would never choose to do something he considers to be unjust, for that he knows is wrong. I have argued that a central claim of the *Apology* is that Socrates has always adhered to SV throughout his life. His speech in the "penalty phase" takes this a step further by presenting a graphic example of Socrates living by SV in the present moment. He describes himself as having led an active private life, reiterating that public office would have led to a premature death,[32] in which he approached people and, in effect, attempted to persuade them to adopt SV and to be sure that they put no aim ahead of how they might be as good and wise as possible (36b–c). Then

[31] See Vasiliou (2002a) for discussion of the phenomenon of Socrates speaking the truth, but expecting to be heard by his audience as speaking *eirônikôs*. I call this "reverse irony."

[32] I shall discuss this in chapter two.

he considers what penalty he deserves for having led such a life and offers the infamous suggestion that it should be free meals at the Prytaneum. It is important to notice that both times he assesses his penalty he is careful to remind the audience that he is being forced to make an assessment of what he deserves (note the occurrences of δεῖ at 36d2 and e2). If he must make a concrete decision, he must make it in accordance with SV. It would be unjust to assess a penalty for himself, if as far as he can tell he deserves a reward. Therefore if he must assess his penalty "justly" (κατὰ τὸ δίκαιον), he assesses it at free meals.[33] Socrates explains his reasoning in what follows:

> I am convinced that I have never willingly done wrong to anyone [πέπεισμαι ἐγὼ ἑκὼν εἶναι μηδένα ἀδικεῖν ἀνθρώπων], but I am not persuading you of this[34] . . . Since, then, I am convinced that I have not done anyone wrong, I am far from doing wrong to myself, by speaking against myself as deserving of a bad thing, or assessing any such treatment for myself. Why should I do that? For fear of the penalty Meletus demands for me, when I say that I don't know if that is a good thing or a bad one? In preference to that, am I then to choose one of the things I know very well [εὖ οἶδα] to be bad, and demand that instead? (37a5–6 . . . 37b2–8)

What follows is a list of possible punishments: imprisonment, fines, and banishment. One might read this passage as saying that Socrates knows that these things are themselves bad.[35] But what is bearing the brunt of Socrates' argument here is again his knowledge of SV. When he repeats his claim that he doesn't know whether the penalty Meletus demands for him – i.e. death – is good or bad, he recalls the avowal of SV, which supplied the contrast with his ignorance about the nature of death earlier (29b). In the earlier passage he follows his avowal of knowledge of SV with: "I will never fear or flee from things about which I do not know whether they might be good, rather than from bad things which I know (οἶδα) are bad (κακά) (29b7–9)." The present passage recalls this principle, along with the contrast between Socrates' knowledge of it and his ignorance about death, and presents Socrates as applying it to himself. What Socrates *knows* is bad is to do himself an injustice. What is bad in this context then is not, for example, exile per se, but his proposing exile as punishment *when he does not deserve it*; that is an example of doing himself an injustice and so a violation of SV.[36]

[33] I think Socrates is entirely serious when he says this, although he knows that it will not work as a real penalty. It is another example of "reverse irony." See Vasiliou (2002a), 225.

[34] I shall discuss the idea of Socrates' never "willingly" doing wrong below, 1.6.

[35] See Reeve (1989), 172–3, and Brickhouse and Smith (1994), 35–6.

[36] The two avowal passages in *Euthyd*. 283c4–5 and 296e8–297a1 fit the same pattern as well. In the former, Socrates avows that he knows he "should never ever deny that" he wants Cleinias to become wise and virtuous, and in the latter Socrates knows that the good are not unjust.

Whenever Socrates claims to have moral knowledge, then, the object of his knowledge is SV. Further, whenever Socrates disavows knowledge, it is invariably knowledge of an answer to a "What is F?" question, most often about the virtues or virtue itself. In the dialogues, then, Socrates' avowals and disavowals of knowledge follow the distinction, highlighted in the *Apology*, between SV and a substantive account of what virtue is. We recall too that this distinction is central to the *Cleitophon*: Socrates' avowals and disavowals follow what we would expect given Cleitophon's criticism that Socrates persuaded him to adopt SV, but utterly failed to teach him what virtue is.

Let us turn now to the disavowal passage from the *Gorgias*:

> These things which appeared to us to be the case in the earlier arguments, I'd say, are held firm and bound down, even if it is rather crude to say so, by iron and adamantine arguments – at any rate it seems this way so far. And unless you or someone more vigorous than you undoes them, no one who says something other than what I've been saying now will be able to speak well [καλῶς]. For my account [λόγος] at any rate is always the same: that I do not know how these things are [ἐγὼ ταῦτα οὐκ οἶδα ὅπως ἔχει]; yet still no one that I happen to meet, just like now, is ever able to speak otherwise without being ridiculous. (508e6–509a7)

Scholars have been divided over how to understand the passage.[37] It can appear at first like a startling contradiction, with Socrates on one hand claiming to have proven a particular conclusion and have bound it down with unbreakable arguments, and yet nevertheless disavowing knowledge of that conclusion.[38] Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith suggest that the key lies in reading carefully the language of the disavowal itself.[39] They emphasize that Socrates uses particular language here and in two other passages – *Euthyphro* 4e4–8 and *Charmides* 166c7–d6 – which concern, respectively, the nature of piety and the nature of temperance: he denies knowing "how these things are." While acknowledging that this expression does not occur in many other passages where Socrates disavows knowledge, they nevertheless believe it points to a distinction between Socrates' knowing *that* something is the case, and knowing *why* it is the case; the latter is what Socrates considers true wisdom and it is this that he disavows.

Although I disagree with Brickhouse and Smith's conclusion, I would like to exploit their point about the particularity of the language. I do not believe that "how things are" means anything different from "what

[37] See, e.g., Vlastos (1985/1994), 58 ff.

[38] Dodds (1959), 341 remarks that it is as though Plato belatedly remembers to have Socrates speak in character.

[39] Brickhouse and Smith (1994), 38–45 and 127.

F is", and that is why we have both expressions used interchangeably in Socratic disavowals. As confirmed by the passages in the *Euthyphro* and *Charmides*, knowing "how things are" refers to the substantive knowledge of what a particular virtue is that would be possessed by someone who could successfully answer the "What is F?" question. All of the claims to knowledge and truth in the *Gorgias*, however, are claims about SV.[40] What this passage says is that Socrates has total, absolute confidence in SV, and, as he says in the *Apology*, he knows it, but he has this knowledge and its attendant confidence in the face of not knowing how these things are – that is, while at the same time not having *knowledge* of *what virtue is*. Plato has Socrates being deliberately provocative insofar as he is explicitly highlighting the strangeness of someone who knows that virtue is the supreme aim of life, but then simultaneously disavows knowledge of what virtue is. Although exploring this odd position is the central concern of this book, we should realize at this early stage that there is no contradiction in Socrates' position once we recognize that, as in all of the other relevant passages, what is avowed is SV and what is disavowed is virtue-knowledge.

We have seen that distinguishing between SV and determining what virtue is enables us to read the disavowal in the *Gorgias* consistently with every other passage where Socrates avows or disavows moral knowledge. I have shown so far that the *Apology* treats aiming and determining questions as critically distinct, and that understanding this distinction makes Socrates' disavowals and avowals of knowledge clear and consistent throughout the dialogues.

1.4 SV AND THE PRIORITY OF DEFINITION

Since I take Socrates' avowals of moral knowledge at their word and maintain that Socrates avows knowledge of SV, I need to address the question of the priority of definition. Some scholars take the thesis of the priority of definition to imply that without knowing what F is one cannot know anything about F. If this is a thesis that Socrates holds quite generally, how could he claim to know SV, while disavowing knowledge of what virtue is? Terence Irwin maintains that Socrates' acceptance of the priority of definition together with his avowal at *Apology* 29b6–7 leaves three options: "either

[40] See the many passages cited in Vlastos (1985/1994). Benson (2000), ch. 10, tries to downplay the avowals in the *Apology* and to avoid those in the *Gorgias* by suggesting that they are somehow anomalous. On my interpretation the reason that we find avowals in the *Apology* and *Gorgias*, but consistent disavowals in the "dialogues of definition," is that the latter dialogues are concerned with the determination of what virtue is, while the *Apology* and *Gorgias* centrally deal with SV. See chapters three and four.

[Socrates] does not accept the priority of definition, or he is inconsistent, or this remark does not really state a claim to knowledge."[41] Irwin defends the third, claiming that all Socrates maintains is that he has a "moral conviction," which does not amount to knowledge, despite the fact that he says, "*I know* [οἶδα] that it is bad and shameful to do wrong . . ." The problem with this solution is that Socrates is in the midst of warning the jurors against rash and unwarranted epistemic claims in the most explicit terms: fear of death is unfounded because it involves thinking that one knows that death is the greatest evil, when no person knows this. He continues:

> And yet how could this not be the most blameworthy ignorance: thinking that one knows what one does not know? But I, men [of Athens], am different from most people to this extent in this case too, and indeed if I would say that I am wiser in anything than anyone, it would be this: that not knowing adequately about death, so too I think that I do not know. But, doing wrong and disobeying a superior, either god or human being, that I know is bad and shameful. (29b1–7)

In this context, where Socrates is manifestly applying the lessons he learned from his investigation into the meaning of the oracle (summed up at 21d4–6), heaping scorn on people who would falsely claim to know what they don't, and bragging that he differs from the majority of people precisely by avoiding this, it is difficult not to believe that Socrates is setting the listener up for the stark contrast with something he *does* claim to know: that it is bad and shameful to do wrong. Fortunately we can take Socrates at his word. There is no textual evidence that we ought to apply the "priority of definition" to SV.

Hugh Benson usefully divides the view known as "priority of definition" into two claims:[42]

(1) If A fails to know what F-ness is, then A fails to know, for any x, that x is F; and
(2) If A fails to know what F-ness is, then A fails to know, for any G, that F-ness is G.

(1) concerns what I have called "determining questions" in the here and now. Without knowing what F is, one cannot know, for any token x, whether x is F. It should be clear from my reading of the *Apology* and my interpretation of SV that I believe that Socrates agrees with (1). Because Socrates does not know what virtue in general is, he has no way of *knowing* whether any token action is or is not virtuous.[43] (1) is supported directly in

[41] Irwin (1995), 28–9. [42] Benson (2000), 113. He calls (1) "(P)" and (2) "(D)."
[43] With the exception of his divine sign, which simply tells him the answer to the determining question without providing him with knowledge. In chapter two we will see how he proceeds to

several passages (*HiMa* 286c5–d7, 304d5–e3), as well as by my reading of the *Apology*.[44]

The outstanding issue is whether my claim that Socrates avows knowledge of SV conflicts with any textual evidence for his adherence to some version of (2). It can certainly seem so. If Socrates knows that virtue is supreme in the sense I have discussed, but disavows knowing what virtue is, and also believes that in order to know *anything at all* about F, including that F is G, one must first know what F is, then it would seem that there is a contradiction here. First, however, let us note that there is nothing inconsistent with maintaining that one ought to aim at virtue above all and that one ought never to act contrary to virtue (SV as an explicit aim and limiting condition), and yet denying that one knows what virtue is. This is all the more so once we have seen what constitutes knowing what virtue is for Socrates: successfully answering the "What is F?" question about virtue and thus being a moral expert who can knowledgeably and correctly identify token actions as virtuous as well as pass this ability on to others. Cleitophon's complaint is not that Socrates says anything contradictory; it is simply frustrating for the purpose of serving as a guide to action. If I know that I ought never to act contrary to virtue, but I do not know what virtue is, how can I knowingly identify any token action as virtuous or not? And thus how can I adhere to SV, even if I want to? There is clearly something provocative and perplexing about Socrates' position. Insofar as he seems unable or unwilling to supply answers to determining questions, it seems that one cannot live by SV.

The formulation of the problem of the priority of definition with respect to SV dictates its solution. Given that Socrates explicitly avows knowledge of SV as we have seen, whatever the scope of the priority of definition, and various scholars have tried to minimize and constrain its scope, it must not apply to SV. Putting the solution this way can make it seem ad hoc, but I do not think it is for the following reasons.

First, there is no text where Socrates explicitly says that he cannot know that one ought to be virtuous above all until he knows what virtue is. So there is no application of the principle of the priority of definition to SV in the text. At *Meno* 71a–b, he says that he cannot know whether virtue is teachable or how it is acquired (cf. *La*. 190b7–c2) until he knows what it is.

make particular decisions in accordance with SV, without the aid of his divine sign and while nevertheless disavowing knowledge of virtue. It is clear, however, that Socrates forms beliefs about whether certain actions are virtuous or not. In chapter four, I will consider the relationship between SV and the "What is F?" question in further detail.

[44] For further evidence for (1) and considerations of those who dispute it, see Benson (2000), ch. 6.

Whatever other predicates this may extend to, barring text to the contrary, I deny that it applies to virtue's supremacy.

Secondly, the form of SV makes it sound like an instance of knowing that F is G in that I claim that Socrates knows that virtue is supreme. But when we consider what it *means* to be supreme, we see that virtue's supremacy is a function of an agent's *relationship to* virtue and not an intrinsic property of virtue itself. *We* ought to strive above all to do virtuous actions and so to be virtuous people (and to avoid vicious actions and becoming vicious people). It is clear, however, that this is not saying something about what virtue itself is or is like, in the sense of saying that all virtuous actions have feature G or that being virtuous is simply a matter of having knowledge of some sort. So those who believe that Socrates adheres to the priority of definition quite broadly might still exempt SV from falling under it since it is about people's relationship to virtue rather than about virtue itself.

Finally, Socrates does deny knowing whether rhetoric is fine without knowing what rhetoric is (*Gor*. 463c3–6, 462c10–d2), and the same about sophistry (*Pr*. 312c1–4). But this is never said about virtue. As we shall see in chapter five, when Socrates is pushed by a radical interlocutor such as Thrasymachus he goes so far as to say that, since he does not know what justice is, he does not even know whether justice is a virtue or not (*Rep*. 1, 354b6, c2). But Socrates does not disavow knowledge of SV even there. Given his ignorance of what justice is, he disavows knowing whether justice, as ordinarily conceived, is an excellence or not. Thrasymachus' challenge is not to virtue as such, but to justice conceived of in the ordinary way (cf. *Rep*. 1, 348e). Thrasymachus still attaches (what would ordinarily be conceived of as) injustice to virtue and wisdom.

Thus in keeping with his disavowal of knowledge and his adherence to a version of the priority of definition Socrates denies knowing (but does not deny having beliefs, or even true beliefs about) which token acts or people are virtuous, which types of acts are virtuous, whether virtue is teachable, how it is acquired, and even, when pressed, whether justice, ordinarily conceived, is a virtue or not. But he never denies that he knows SV, and his knowledge of SV does not depend, as those other claims do, on knowing what virtue is.

1.5 SOCRATES' CRITICISM OF HIS FELLOW ATHENIANS

Socrates' unwavering commitment to SV guarantees that he always does what he takes to be best, that is, what he takes to be virtuous. We have also seen that he disavows knowledge of what virtue in general is (that is, he

cannot answer the "What is F?" question about virtue). The disavowal implies that he cannot *know* that any individual action in some circumstance is in fact the virtuous one, unless he has some way of knowing what the virtuous action is other than by applying a Socratic definition.[45] But Socrates must at times make particular decisions about what to do, and so must make an attempt to deliberate with the aim of realizing a virtuous action (or of avoiding acting contrary to virtue), although he cannot know whether he has succeeded. He can nevertheless still know that he has followed SV, even if his substantive decision, on account of his ignorance of what virtue is, turns out to be incorrect. Adherence to SV makes Socrates' actions superior to those of many other Athenians, who frequently, in Socrates' opinion, ignore a concern with excellence and instead focus on their bodies, wealth, or reputations. They have, as I put it in the Introduction, "one thought too few." Appreciating SV and how it is distinct from a determination about what virtue is enables us to see that there are two ways a person can go wrong and commit a disgraceful action according to Socrates. One is by violating SV, either by ignoring it or by consciously elevating some other end, for example one's personal survival, above doing the virtuous thing. The other is to share Socrates' commitment to SV, but then to err about what the virtuous action is, and so do the wrong thing. Socrates' criticisms of the Athenians ought to follow suit, for, if the account I am defending is correct, he cannot be criticizing them for failing to know what virtue is, since he himself does not know what virtue is and suggests in the *Apology* that this wisdom may not be possible for human beings.[46]

[45] His "divine sign" is one way he is able to identify that the action he is about to embark on would be wrong; see 2.2.

[46] He does not explicitly say that human beings cannot achieve expert knowledge of what virtue is, but he makes remarks that show that he is skeptical about such a possibility. At 20d5–e2, Socrates distinguishes between a sort of wisdom he has and the wisdom that is attributed to Evenus, and the other sophists, whom he has just discussed. It is explicitly claimed that Evenus holds techne-knowledge of virtue (see 20c1), and, as we have seen, this is the knowledge that Socrates disavows. In the last three lines of this passage (29d9–e2), Socrates says that such wisdom (techne-knowledge of virtue) would be a wisdom greater than human. Socrates, with his typical conditional irony, does not rule out that Evenus might have such knowledge, but he does use the optative at 20e1, suggesting a contrary-to-fact construction: such knowledge *would be* greater than human, if he had it. Again, at 23a5–6, Socrates says that the lesson of his investigations into the meaning of the oracle is that in reality the god alone is wise. In the context, the wisdom in question is clearly not ordinary techne-knowledge, which the craftsmen have, nor is it the awareness of one's own ignorance, which is the "sort of wisdom" that Socrates possesses, but the knowledge that Evenus claims: knowledge of what virtue is. I shall argue in chapter eight that Socrates' disavowal of knowledge of the Form of the Good in the *Republic*, knowledge of which would enable one to determine what virtue is, is entirely consistent with the disavowals we have seen here. There he holds out the possibility that such knowledge could be achieved by the right sort of person in the right sort of city who has received the right sort of education.

Therefore Socrates attacks the Athenians for two culpable failings: not adhering to SV (which is something Socrates plainly takes to be up to them, and something which he knows they should do) and thinking that they know things that they don't (e.g., about virtue and the nature of death).[47] The latter is established in the story of Socrates' testing of the oracle, and in his first discussion of death (29a4–b6; note especially ἐπονείδιστος at 29b2). The former is manifested in Socrates' role as gadfly. He declares that he will never give up philosophy or exhorting (παρακελευόμενος) whomever he may meet with his usual words:

Most excellent friend, you are an Athenian, a member of a city that is the most important and has the greatest reputation for wisdom and power, are you not ashamed [οὐκ αἰσχύνῃ] to care about how you will acquire as much wealth as possible, and reputation and honor, while you do not care about or give any thought to wisdom and truth, and how your soul may be as good as possible? And if some one of you disputes [what I am saying] and says that he is concerned about [wisdom, truth, and the state of his soul], I will not let him go straightaway or leave him, but I will question and examine and test him, and if he does not seem to me to have acquired virtue, *although he claims to* [φάναι δέ], I will reproach him [by saying] that he attaches the least value to the most worthy things, and attaches more value to baser things [τὰ πλείστου ἄξια περὶ ἐλαχίστου ποιεῖται, τὰ δὲ φαυλότερα περὶ πλείονος].[48] (29d7–30a2)

Here we see both elements at work: a commitment to virtue as supreme and an examination to see whether a person truly knows what virtue is, or merely falls into the trap of thinking he knows what he does not. Socrates does not criticize the Athenians in this passage simply for failing to acquire virtue, for, if I am right, he himself might fail to be virtuous. The criticism is to have elevated some other aim above virtue or to have failed to acquire virtue, *while smugly and falsely believing and claiming that one has*. This latter flaw, unlike the flaw of failing to be virtuous *simpliciter*, is remediable and up to the agent to achieve through self-examination and testing. Failing to be virtuous, that is, failing to have knowledge of what virtue is, may well be, at least according to the Socrates of the *Apology*, an inescapable aspect of the human condition.[49]

[47] Undermining a false conceit of knowledge and replacing it with *aporia* is a well-known aim of the Socratic elenchus. The critical importance of this activity will be shown in chapter four.

[48] I will discuss the importance of the idea of what one "attaches more value to" in chapter two.

[49] This marks a significant contrast between my position and Brickhouse and Smith's (1994). According to them, Socrates knows *that* things are virtuous, but not why. This is how Socrates can claim (or at least strongly imply) that he is a "good man" in the *Apology* (29c–d, 41c–d). By contrast, I believe that Socrates knows he is a good man in the sense that he has always adhered to SV. Apart from divine help from his *daimonion*, Socrates does not know whether what he has done is in fact virtuous or not, for he does not know what virtue is.

1.6 SOCRATIC INCONTINENCE

Supported by anecdotal evidence from his life, Socrates argues that he has always acted in accordance with SV. What does this say about *his* relationship to incontinence? On the typical understanding of incontinence, it is the phenomenon of knowing what the right action is, but failing to do it because one is overcome by a desire to act in a contrary way. The distinction between having virtue as a supreme aim and the determination of what the virtuous act *is* allows us to recognize that Socrates concedes that he may have actually done wrong in his life, although he has always aimed at doing the right thing and at avoiding wrongdoing. In a sense, then, Socrates has never been incontinent. If what he says about himself is true, he has never been swayed from doing what he took to be the virtuous action by a desire for something else instead. Whatever wrongdoing he may have done he has done in ignorance, in the false belief that it was in fact not wrongdoing.

This affects how we ought to understand one of the most famous features of Socrates: his intellectualism. It can seem mysterious how simply knowing that an action is virtuous can by itself lead one to do it. But, cognizant of the aiming/determining distinction, this is not quite what Socrates is claiming, at least about his own case. Given that he denies that he knows that a particular action is virtuous, it is not the knowledge *that* an action is virtuous that is sufficient to lead one to do it. Rather it is the knowledge that the virtuous action must always be done (or, the vicious action always avoided). Noticing this does not entirely dispel the strangeness of Socrates' position. Why should knowledge of SV be sufficient to get someone to act in accordance with it? This question does not seem prima facie more easily answerable than a general question about how knowledge could be sufficient for virtue. But we should notice one thing. Typically it seems to people that Socrates' intellectualism is wildly implausible. But Socrates claims to be an example of it. Given his unwavering adherence to SV, any wrongdoing he has committed can only be the result of ignorance. So Socrates' life does not show (on his account of it) that knowledge of what the virtuous action is is sufficient to do it (as the objectionable aspect of Socrates' view is frequently put), but that wrongdoing is a matter of ignorance *for anyone who remains, as he has, committed to SV*.

The question, unanswered in the *Apology*, is why should anyone commit to SV? And, further, why does Socrates in particular? This gets at some of the complexity of SV. Adhering to SV says something about the psychological state of the agent: virtue will be the supreme aim of her actions. Given an active commitment to SV the agent will perform required virtuous actions,

and always avoid acting contrary to virtue. So we know something about the agent's motivation: we know that the agent is motivated to determine what the virtuous or vicious action is, and base her acting (or not acting) on that ground. Thus when the agent committed to SV acts, she will refrain from acting viciously *because the action is contrary to virtue* and will act virtuously *because the action is virtuous*. What we don't know, however, is *why* the agent is so committed. If the commitment arises simply from the knowledge that SV is true, then the puzzle about Socratic intellectualism arises again, but on a different level. A question about Socrates' view and about SV as a principle of action remains: is the agent's *motivation for* adhering to SV important, and if so, how?

That question aside, however, if an agent is absolutely committed to SV (as Socrates claims he is and always has been), then, *whatever* the source of that commitment is, any wrongdoing by the agent can only be the result of ignorance. Thus, in response to the claim that Socrates is unintentionally corrupting the youth because of his ignorance, he says he ought to be taken aside and instructed: "for it is clear that if I am instructed, I will stop doing what I am doing unwillingly" (*Ap*. 26a4). This ought not to be read, as it sometimes is, as saying that incontinence in general is impossible or that knowledge is simply sufficient for virtue. Rather, in the context it says that, *given Socrates' unwavering commitment to SV*, knowledge of what the virtuous action is will indeed be sufficient for acting virtuously. This is the way, I think, Socrates himself typically presents matters.[50] It is clear that it is not the same as the traditional puzzle about Socratic intellectualism. For the commitment to SV plays the role of a standing motivation for performing virtuous actions (and avoiding vicious ones), so that all it awaits is the correct identification of actions as virtuous or vicious.

So, we now need to ask what effects the commitment to SV; if it is knowledge alone, then it would seem that some version of intellectualism is back on the table. This is a reasonable question and one that an examination of Socratic intellectualism requires asking; I do not claim to be able to answer it satisfactorily. But if we proceed to it immediately, we shall miss something essential. What is important, indeed supremely important, for action, how one lives one's life, and one's character, is *that* one is so committed. *Why* one is so committed is also important, but in a different way. For example, perhaps one is committed to SV out of a sense of shame. When faced with a financially profitable action that has already somehow

[50] If this interpretation is correct, then we cannot find textual evidence for Socrates' denial of incontinence in the *Apology* at any rate. I shall discuss the denial of incontinence a bit further in connection with the *Protagoras* (see 4.4).

been determined to be vicious, perhaps one is simply too ashamed to act contrary to virtue. Or imagine that one is committed to SV out of love for Socrates (as I think some interlocutors appear to be). What brings about the commitment to SV is significant insofar as we want agents to have a long-standing and stable commitment to it. The appeal to shame or to love of Socrates to effect the commitment to SV may be suspect because of the strength of that motivation; if the agent's shame or love wanes (perhaps as a result of temptation), he will no longer be committed. But this is a standing worry about any motivation whatsoever – whether one is motivated to cling to SV by appeal to rational argument alone, the hope of heavenly rewards, love of Socrates, or cash prizes. The only relevant difference between these is how well they continue to motivate a given agent. The answer to what motivates different people best lies in human psychology. Socrates and Plato are concerned with this, and, as we shall see, they will offer arguments about why an agent ought to be committed to SV in the *Gorgias* and *Republic* (beyond "Aren't you ashamed not to be?").

What the aiming/determining distinction brings out is that we should not confuse the issue of the *motivation for* the commitment to SV with the more common issue of whether an agent has an "ulterior motive" when acting. The latter concerns whether an action is done "for its own sake" and affects the moral assessment of the agent's behavior.[51] Commitment to SV (however *it* was brought about) ensures that the agent's motive is pure in the relevant sense, because it ensures that the agent will act with the aim of virtue above all. SV ensures this because it sets a particular problem for the agent to solve: to determine what virtue requires or forbids. As long as *this* remains what regulates the agent's action, then, barring ignorance, she will non-coincidentally act virtuously.[52] When someone has an "ulterior motive", what that means is that he is really trying to *solve a different problem*. For example, if I act kindly toward someone because I hope to be allowed to use their swimming pool in the summer, then the problem I am solving, and so the goal I am aiming at, is how to gain access to a pool in the summer.

By contrast the commitment to SV may *itself* be effected by some "impure" (or even unknown) motive, but that does not taint the moral

[51] Indeed typically including whether what the agent has done is even to count as virtuous action. See Whiting (2002).

[52] Herman (1993), 2–6 makes the same point with respect to acting from the motive of duty in Kant. Acting from the motive of duty secures that an agent's interest will be in the rightness or morality of the action. In the language I am using, commitment to SV fixes the nature of the problem that the agent must solve in acting: to determine what the virtuous action is (or what is not contrary to virtue).

worth of the action. An agent committed to SV does an action *because it is virtuous* or avoids it *because it is contrary to virtue*. That is what it means for virtue to be supreme – they are not acting for a further end. But this does not say anything about *why* that agent is motivated to act in that way – why does she put virtue above all? And this, I think, does not matter with respect to the assessment of the moral worth of her actions; it matters only insofar as we want whatever it is that motivates her to be a strong and permanent motivating force.

CHAPTER 2

Determining virtue in the here and now: Socrates in the Apology *and* Crito

What we have discovered in chapter one about SV and Socrates' relationship to it should lead us to expect that Socrates would be in a particularly difficult situation when it comes to action. Given his commitment to SV, he must do the virtuous action or at least avoid doing the vicious action, and yet, given his disavowal of knowledge of what virtue is, he seems to have no way of knowing which action is or is not virtuous. How does he decide, then, whether to get Leon as he was ordered or whether to go to battle, how to conduct his trial, and, in the *Crito*, whether or not to escape from prison? We shall see that he has two ways of dealing with this predicament: sometimes his *daimonion* comes to the rescue and simply tells him that a certain token action he is contemplating is contrary to virtue; that is, the *daimonion* resolves the outstanding determining question for him. At other times, such as in the *Crito* where there is no mention of the divine sign, Socrates says that he follows the argument that seems best to him upon reflection (*Cr.* 46b4–6).[1]

Aside from particular decisions to engage in certain conversations, it is only in the *Apology* and *Crito* that we witness Socrates attempt to determine what the virtuous thing to do is in the *hic et nunc*. Especially in the argument of the personified Laws (*Cr.* 50a–54c), Socrates deliberates between two specific "actions": remaining in prison, or escaping.[2] In the *Apology* he cites various individual decisions in his life (fighting in battles, not turning in Leon, and so on) as examples of making decisions based on SV, but we were not privy to *how* those decisions were made, and their correctness was never at issue. Socrates' point in the *Apology* was not that he indisputably acted rightly, for example, by not bringing Leon in (though of course he believes

[1] I shall discuss this passage below. Note, though, that Socrates says here that he follows the *logos* that seems best to him "not just now for the first time [that is, with Crito in prison] but always."

[2] I put "action" in quotations because we shall see that Socrates and Crito importantly consider remaining in prison (and so literally actively doing nothing) a kind of doing or acting in a broader sense.

he did), but that he chose not to follow the order of the Thirty because he aimed solely at acting virtuously (and at not acting contrary to virtue), not allowing risk of death or bad reputation *to count as competing goals* in his (as we shall see, aiming) deliberation. Certain passages in the *Apology*, however, do shed light on how Socrates believes specific decisions about the virtuous course of action should be made in the here and now. In the *Crito* we are apparently[3] privy to full-blown Socratic deliberation, which leads to one of his most significant decisions and actions: to remain in prison rather than to escape. I want to look closely at these arguments in the *Apology* and *Crito* in order to understand how Socrates answers the question "What is the virtuous action here and now?" We should keep in mind that one easy way of answering this question – a way that famously arises in the dialogues of definition – is not open to Socrates. If he had knowledge of what virtue in general is, that is, if he had a Socratic definition of virtue which told him what all virtuous actions have in common, then he would have a way of determining what action is virtuous in any situation.[4] But, as we saw in chapter one, Socrates disavows having this knowledge. So when he must make particular decisions in his life, he cannot, despite his commitment to SV, simply rely on his knowledge of what virtue is to solve the determining question for him. He needs some other way; SV itself says only that one must always do the virtuous action and never act contrary to virtue. While I believe this is far from a trivial claim, it goes no distance towards determining what the virtuous course of action *is* in any particular circumstance, and yet that is the situation Socrates faces, particularly in the *Crito*.

Beyond simply illuminating the important and rather neglected topic of how Socrates makes decisions in the here and now, I shall also argue that a proper understanding of Socratic deliberation solves puzzles about the consistency of the *Apology* and *Crito*. Socrates makes specific decisions in the same way and by appeal to the same types of considerations in both dialogues. Further we shall see that the argument of the Laws, understood properly, is neither wildly authoritarian, nor presented, even by the Laws themselves, as an argument that is definitively correct. Finally, some recent scholars, motivated in part by the unattractiveness of an authoritarian understanding of the Laws' argument, have attempted to dissociate the reasons of the Laws from Socrates' own. A focus on how Socrates makes

[3] I say "apparently" because some scholars, especially recently, dispute the claim that the argument of the Laws does, or even could, represent Socrates' own reasons for deciding to remain in prison. See below.

[4] As he says in the *Euthyphro* (6d–e); see discussion in chapter four.

concrete decisions will show that such a move is not only implausible, but also, fortunately, unnecessary. By asking a rather unorthodox question of the *Apology* and *Crito* – how exactly does Socrates make specific decisions about what the virtuous action is? – I hope to answer some quite orthodox ones along the way.

2.1 ILL-FITTING REMARKS IN THE *APOLOGY*

The classical scholar Kenneth Dover points out something important about Athenian trials: "the question before a jury, as representing the people, was not exactly, 'Has this man, or has he not, committed the act with which he is charged?' but rather, 'what should be done about this man, who has been charged with this offense?'"[5] This would be particularly true in Socrates' case, where the charge is, broadly speaking, "impiety." The jury's job is not just a question of determining fact – has Socrates killed this person or not? – but a question of what should be done with him, given how he has acted towards the youth, the religion of the city, and so forth. The jury is in the position, then, of having to make a concrete decision about what should be done with Socrates.[6] Further, since SV is a principle that Socrates believes that everyone ought to follow, he is explicit from the very beginning of his speech (18a4–5) that the jurors should have only one aim in their deliberations about him: to make the right decision.

Given the significance of SV in his own life, and the emphasis he places on it as what ought to govern the decision of the jury, Socrates says some surprising things. Near the end of the first section of the speech (34c ff.) he claims that one should not beg from the jury, as many defendants typically do. If, as I think we should, we understand "begging" as asking for some treatment despite the fact that it is not *right* or *just* for one to receive that treatment, then the prohibition against it simply follows from SV.[7] But as many readers (frequently, clever undergraduates) have noted,

[5] Dover (1974), 292. For an interesting and provocative discussion of Attic law and the nature of its indeterminacy see Harris (2000).

[6] This is something that Socrates emphasizes in his claims that he is in reality defending *them*, the jury, as well as himself, since, by Socratic lights, the jury is the one at risk of making an unjust decision (see *Ap.* 19a, 30c–e). This is a paradigm of what I call "reverse irony," where Socrates is speaking what he believes to be the truth, but what his listeners will understand as a case of *eironeia*. See Vasiliou (2002a).

[7] Socrates refuses to bring his family before the jury and plead for an acquittal on grounds that it is neither noble (καλόν), just (δίκαιον), nor pious (ὅσιον) to beg from the jury (34d8–35d2). According to Socrates the accused often beseeches the jury "with many tears," leading up children, family, and friends, in an attempt to be pitied as much as possible (34c3–4). Socrates says he will not do this, despite the fact that he will be thought to run "the ultimate risk" by not doing so. If begging from

when Socrates takes this stand about begging he nevertheless mentions his own family, claiming that he too is not "born of oak or rock" (34d4–5), and makes it known that he has three young sons, one adolescent, and two small children. Rhetorically minded readers have taken this as a classic example of paraleipsis. Someone critical of Socrates might point out that while on one hand he criticizes appeals to pity as the acts of an inferior person who values his survival more than virtue, on the other hand he is sure to let the jury and everyone else know that he himself has a family. If Socrates were to act more consistently with the values he espouses, this line of thought continues, he would not have mentioned whether he had a family at all. Perhaps he might even have taken the opportunity to make the point explicitly that his having a family or not is *irrelevant* to the deliberations of the jury, irrelevant to the determination of whether he is justly deserving of punishment and of what punishment he justly deserves. Is Socrates then being rhetorically wily, but morally inconsistent? Scholars who want to emphasize that Socrates is a consistent honest type must somehow explain away this passage.[8] Those who wish to understand Socrates as a sophist of sorts, by contrast, revel in it.

In this passage Socrates also mentions his age (34e4) as a factor that would add to the wrongness of his begging before the jury. What is more striking still is that he refers to his age at least ten times in the *Apology* and three times in the *Crito*, and at critical moments – thirteen times in about thirty pages of text.[9] In each of the three stages of the speech, he mentions his age prominently: in the main body of the speech he mentions his age twice at the very beginning, where he contrasts himself with a young man and states his actual age, and again near the end in explaining why he will not beg from the jury. He also mentions his age during the penalty phase,

the jury is neither noble, just, nor pious – that is, it is a base and ignoble action – then it must not be done simply on the basis of SV, even if the risk is death. "Begging," then, would be a normatively loaded term, which would not include, for example, pleading for something that one might deserve on grounds of justice. It would be limited to asking for something it would not be right or just to receive.

8 See, e.g., Brickhouse and Smith (1989), 202, for an opposing interpretation of this passage: "And like any other man with a family, he is mindful of what conviction will do to those who are dependent on him. He tells the jury that he has a family that includes three sons, two of whom are still small children (34d2–7). *Although he cannot allow these considerations to shape his defense*, they weigh upon him nonetheless . . ." (my emphasis). But if Socrates cannot have these considerations be part of his defense, then he cannot think it right that they weigh on the deliberations of the jurors either. So what is he doing mentioning it? Is the man whose whole life is committed to SV simply "begging" in the very passage where he declares begging neither noble, just, nor pious? This passage cannot be explained away on pain of Socrates contradicting himself on what he claims to be most important: SV.

9 *Ap.*: 17c4, 17d3, 18b2–5, 25d10, 32e2, 34e4, 37d4, 38c1, 38c6–7, 39b2; *Cr.*: 43b10–11, 52e3, 53d8–e1.

when he considers the possibility of proposing exile:[10] "it would be a fine life (καλὸς . . . ὁ βίος) for me, being a person of such an age" (37d4–5) to wander from one city to another. Why mention his age? Would exile perhaps be more reasonable if he were thirty-five? Is his age, as I suggested above, supposed to be a factor for the jury to consider, and if not, why mention it so often?

Finally, he gives mention of his age pride of place less than one Stephanus page later, at the very beginning of the third section of the speech:[11]

> It is not for the sake of a long time [οὐ πολλοῦ γ' ἕνεκα χρόνου], men of Athens, that you will have the reputation and responsibility with those who wish to denigrate the city for having killed Socrates, a wise man – for those wishing to malign you will say that I am wise, even if I am not. At any rate if you waited a short time, you would have had this [result] all by itself [ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου]: for indeed you see my age, that I am already far along in life, and that death is near.[12] (38c1–7)

Why does he say this? Would Socrates have conducted his defense differently if he were younger? Any answer will inevitably be speculative, but we do not require a definitive answer to appreciate something important about Socratic deliberation. One might reason that if Socrates believes that his conduct at trial and remaining in prison are virtuous acts, then his age, like the fact that he has three young children, would be entirely irrelevant. These remarks cannot, however, be dismissed as biographical data Plato happened to decide to include. For the fact that Socrates supplies this information to the jury, when he himself presents SV as the prominent theme of his speech, including specific and repeated references to the jury's duty to decide justly, shows, on pain of a central inconsistency over the very topics he claims to be most earnest about, that he takes such facts to be relevant in a *determination* of what the just action *is* here and now. Socrates believes that the fact that he has a family *is* relevant to the jury's deliberation about what would be a just decision about his fate. Having this be a known factor in deliberation is different from the spectacle Socrates describes of dragging one's children in front of the court, weeping and pleading for undeserved leniency. Socrates' apparent duplicity can be seen as *merely* apparent once we appreciate the significance of the concept of an aiming principle: the *aim* of the jury ought to be to arrive at a just decision. When Socrates mentions his children and his age he is not in any way undermining the

[10] We will see that he expands on his argument as to why he ought not to go into exile in the *Crito*.

[11] This is an especially climactic moment in the speech, being the first thing Socrates says after he has been sentenced to death.

[12] I preserve the litotes and the word order of the first sentence, despite the awkwardness in English.

jury's ability to do this, as a critic might suppose, but providing them with a factor that may be relevant in a "determining deliberation" about what will constitute a just decision in Socrates' case. We shall see the significance of the difference between aiming and determining deliberations in further detail below.

When we turn to the *Crito* we should recall that Socrates presents such considerations about family and his age to a jury that is under the legal obligation to make a concrete decision and under the moral obligation by Socrates himself to make that decision justly (i.e. to follow SV). We cannot dismiss such considerations as irrelevant to a Socratic system of values when Socrates himself raises them prominently in his own defense speech. We should recognize that the *Apology* involves a concrete decision just as much as the *Crito*: only in the *Apology* the *jury* must make it, while in the *Crito*, *Socrates* must.[13]

2.2 THE ROLE OF SOCRATES' DIVINE SIGN AND HIS DECISION TO AVOID PUBLIC LIFE

Socrates' discussion of his refusal to enter public life in the *Apology* is important to the argument for two reasons. First, it is an example of the role of Socrates' divine sign in his life. The divine sign solves the outstanding determining question about action in the here and now, which Socrates faces because of his commitment to SV. Second, Socrates' *ex post facto* understanding of why the *daimonion*'s prohibition against his entering politics was correct is an important example of the sort of considerations Socrates will take into account in the course of answering a determining question.

At 31c ff. Socrates addresses the question of why he has never engaged in public life, if he is indeed the god's gift to Athens and if his whole concern is to lead his fellow citizens towards an excellent way of life. His first answer is that his *daimonion* opposed him. He explains that the divine sign only turns him away from (ἀποτρέπει) doing something which he is about to do, but never actively encourages (προτρέπει) him to do anything (31d3–4). This story makes clear, then, that at some point in his life Socrates intended to

[13] This argument does not prevent someone from insisting on interpreting Socrates as a wily sophist, who would be undeterred by the fact that, while he demands that the jury make the just decision, he at the same time undermines this effort by supplying irrelevant and distracting personal information. I assume, however, that interpreting Socrates as arguing "sophistically" is a less attractive option than understanding his remarks consistently, as I argue we can. There is nothing inconsistent in taking the facts that Socrates has young children and is seventy years old into consideration in determining what a just decision about his fate would be.

enter public life. For the divine sign intervenes, if it does, when Socrates is starting to carry out some intention, not when he is just entertaining a passing thought (see 40b, *Euthydemus* 272e). Furthermore, the divine sign interferes if Socrates is about to do something not right (μὴ ὀρθῶς) (40a5–6), and in the past interfered frequently "even about trivial matters." The divine sign's frequent occurrence in Socrates' life confirms what we would expect from the argument in chapter one: Socrates, lacking the knowledge of what excellence is, is often about to do things that are in fact not virtuous. As we have seen, this is entirely compatible with Socrates throughout his life adhering to SV, and it is easy to imagine how it transpired in the case of political life. While pursuing excellence, young, or at least younger, Socrates makes the substantive and reasonable decision that engaging in politics would be the right thing to do. But then, as he is about to proceed, his divine sign stops him.

The divine sign is Socrates' sole method for discovering answers to determining questions about virtuous actions in the here and now that are guaranteed to be correct. When the divine sign forbids him from acting he has (he believes) infallible evidence that what he is about to do would be (somehow) contrary to virtue. This does not amount to knowledge for Socrates. For by itself the divine sign does not leave him with any understanding of *why* the action is contrary to virtue (having some sort of *logos* or account) (see *Gorgias* 465a, *Meno* 98a–b), nor does he have the capacity of passing the ability to identify virtuous actions correctly on to others, both of which he associates with having knowledge (see *Laches* 186a–b, 187a–b, *Meno* 99a–b).[14] Nevertheless, in ordinary language, we might say that, once the divine sign has spoken to him, Socrates "knows" that the token action he was about to embark upon ought not to be done. The divine sign provides him with a belief (that a certain token action ought not to be done) that is guaranteed to be true, since it is an example of revelation: the god, who by definition has the truth, communicates it to Socrates. So let us grant Socrates' premises: (1) the divine sign exists and is actually communicating with him; (2) the divine sign, as a divinity, knows the objective truth; and (3) the divine sign does not lie to or deceive him. Granted these, it follows that Socrates can "know" that the token action that the divine sign prohibits is contrary to virtue. What sort of knowledge is this? As we have seen, Socrates does not count it as knowledge, for it is not a capacity

[14] Indeed Plato's view that knowledge requires the knower to have an account or explanation has seemed to some scholars more like our concept of understanding; see, e.g., Benson (2000), 216–21, with additional references. Fine (2004) shows how dependent such an idea is on our own conception of what knowledge and understanding consist in.

that he can pass on to others and the *daimonion* provides him with no account or justification for the belief that the action is contrary to virtue. On some externalist theories of justification, however, S knows that p so long as it is not at all accidental that S is right about its being the case that p.[15] Socrates meets this criterion, given his premises. Thus on more externalist views of justification (such as reliabilism and other types of causal theories) the way Socrates has formed the belief that his action is contrary to virtue would be via a causal process that is reliable. So, on some versions of reliabilist theories of justification, Socrates' belief would be justified and he would indeed know that his contemplated action would be contrary to virtue.[16] Now of course this is the sort of example that most reliabilists would treat as a potential counterexample. Clairvoyantly formed beliefs (via mental telepathy or communication from one's divine sign) would appear to count as justified on reliabilist accounts, but most contemporary defenders of reliabilism want to resist this conclusion.[17] But if we were to accept the truth of Socrates' premises (which presumably a contemporary thinker would not), then Socrates knows that he is in possession of true belief.

I have dwelt on this point because it will reappear later in the book. Since Plato is an internalist about justification, for a person to be a knower, he must have cognitive possession of the account or justification for the truth of his belief for himself. This is why the divine sign does not provide Socrates with knowledge. Nevertheless the communication of the divine sign guarantees to Socrates *that* his belief is true. Thus, even without having *knowledge* in Plato's sense of which actions are virtuous, Socrates can be sure that he is not acting contrary to virtue insofar as he follows the commands of the divine sign. Socrates' argument in the *Meno* (97a–98d) that true belief is just as good a guide to action as knowledge speaks to this point. To anticipate argument from chapters seven and eight, in the *Republic* the philosopher-kings will play the role for the mass of citizens in the Kallipolis that the divine sign plays for Socrates. Only the philosopher-kings will have knowledge, in Plato's sense, of what the nature of virtue is and so only they will be able to answer determining questions in a knowledgeable way. But the other citizens will be persuaded to take the philosopher-kings'

[15] See, e.g., Goldman (1986), (1992), Nozick (1981), and Unger (1968).

[16] Indeed Socrates would not necessarily even have to know or be justified in believing his premises about the divine sign. That would be necessary if he were to be justified in believing that he is justified. But according to at least some versions of reliabilism, so long as the premises were true, Socrates would in fact be justified (and would know) that p.

[17] See, e.g., Sosa (1991).

determinations as correct (which, in fact, the determinations are). The citizens then will have true beliefs about what they ought to do and not do; and, on an externalist account of justification, they will know what they ought to do or not do since their beliefs are in fact justified, although they themselves have no cognitive access to the justification – an account of the Forms.

The divine sign, then, functions as a moral expert or moral superior who passes on to Socrates infallible information as to whether some token action is contrary to virtue. The divine sign simply tells him *that* some token action is contrary to virtue and it is simply his good fortune to be blessed by possession of the *daimonion*. So when it appears,[18] the divine sign *resolves* the outstanding problem of how to answer the determining question in the *hic et nunc*, but it does not do this by providing Socrates with knowledge of what virtue is but by infallibly telling Socrates "no" with regard to some contemplated action.

Now I shall turn to the significance of the divine sign's prohibition against Socrates' entering public life for understanding Socratic deliberation. Although the divine sign itself offers no account of *why* something should not be done, Socrates says that he now appreciates that the divine sign's opposition to his entering public life was in fact an entirely excellent thing (παγκάλως, *Ap*. 31d6). Moreover, what is of particular interest here, he offers an explanation of *why* staying out of politics was, in hindsight, the correct thing to do:

> For know well, men of Athens, that if I had attempted to engage in political affairs long ago, I would have long ago perished and I would have been of no benefit either to you or to myself. And do not get angry with me for speaking the truth: for it is not possible that any person who genuinely opposes and hinders the many injustices and illegalities that arise in the city will be spared death either by you or by any other majority. But it is necessary that one who really fights on behalf of justice live as a private citizen and not as public servant, if he intends to survive for even a short time. (31d6–32a2)

There are a number of striking features in this passage. First, consider the nature of the justification of the correctness of the *daimonion*'s prohibition. If Socrates had entered politics, he would have been killed long ago, and therefore been of no benefit to himself or to his fellow citizens. His appeal is to the supposed consequences that would have arisen had he entered

[18] Does the divine sign appear *every* time Socrates is about to do something contrary to virtue? *Ap*. 40c2–3 suggests that Socrates believes it does. If so, then, since Socrates' commitment to SV never wavers, he never does wrong; see 1.6.

politics. What is crucial is that the fact that he would have been killed long ago and been of no benefit to himself or his fellow citizens is the *very reason why* entering politics would not have been the right thing to do. We have seen how important it has been to Socrates to argue throughout the *Apology* that virtue is supreme as an end, particularly compared with one's personal survival. But we can now see that the fact that Socrates would be killed by some action is indeed relevant to the assessment of *whether* the action is the virtuous one or not in the first place. Socrates must never *aim* simply to save his life. But his argument here, which depends crucially on the *consequences* of the proposed action, is that his greatly premature death, and the subsequent lack of his ability to help himself or his fellow citizens, is the explanation of why entering political life was not at the time the right thing to do.[19]

Socrates follows this passage with examples of the times in which he was compelled to engage in political activities. As I argued in chapter one, he shows that his actions always consisted of doing what he took to be just and right, even when he thereby risked his own life. But these examples should be all the more striking since they are followed by an argument *from* the fact that he would be prematurely killed *to* the conclusion that he should not engage in politics. After discussing his handling of the trial of generals from Arginusae and his refusal to bring Leon in for execution under the Thirty, he again returns to the points in the above passage:

> Do you think I would have survived all these years if I were engaged in public affairs and if I, acting worthily as a good man, assisted what is right [τοῖς δικαίοις] and, as is necessary, I attached the highest value to this [περὶ πλείστου ἐποιούμην]?[20] Far from it, men of Athens, nor would any other man. (32e2–33a1)

The couple of times Socrates was drawn into public affairs not of his own volition – that is, public issues were forced upon him – it ended up that he was compelled, by SV, to engage in actions that risked his

[19] Julia Annas (1999), 33 comments on Socrates' commitment to virtue as follows, referring to *Apology* 28b: "In reply to an imagined critic who faults him [Socrates] for behaving so as to be risking death, he says that we should not consider the consequences of our actions at all, even death, but only the issue of whether the action is just or not." I think this represents an ordinary and common understanding of Socrates' view. I do not believe that Annas understands herself as saying anything controversial here, but intends simply to paraphrase Socrates' own words. But Socrates never says that we should not consider the consequences of our actions "at all." He does say that if an action is not virtuous then it must not be done, no matter what other benefits one might get by doing it. But, in the process of *determining* what the virtuous action is, he leaves open, perfectly reasonably, that we will want to consider the consequences of different courses of action.

[20] We noted this phrase in chapter one. We shall see below that it is used as well in the *Crito* to indicate a question about aim: what one takes to be most important in action.

life. By illustrating this he is doing two things: first, as mentioned, he is illustrating his unyielding commitment to SV even when faced with death. But second, we can see that these examples, in context, try to show that the counterfactual claim that an active public life would surely have led to his early death is in fact correct. There is something deliberately playful going on here: Socrates is citing the times in which he ran the risk of death for the sake of justice, all as evidence for the claim that, if he had entered politics, he would indeed have been killed. This is a funny conclusion from a man who has been arguing passionately for the last four Stephanus pages that he, and all potentially excellent people, should give no thought to death when compared with virtue. He now shows that probable premature death, and its effect of making him unable to pursue, and urge others to pursue, virtue turns out to explain *why* entering politics was not the right action. Socrates' death certainly counts as a factor in his determining deliberation about what the right thing to do is; in fact, in the example at hand it is the decisive factor. What SV rules out is to *aim* at avoiding death, premature or not, at the expense of doing what is right. But while scholars have taken Socrates' ethics to imply that the rightness or wrongness of an action is to be determined *independently* of such purportedly mundane considerations as life, death, injury, loss of property, and so on, his own understanding of the correctness of the divine sign shows that this is wrong. Virtue is supreme, but what the virtuous action is is determined by looking at all of the particular factors relevant on the occasion. If we fail to appreciate that SV is an aiming principle, we fail to understand Socratic deliberation.

The most important text for understanding how Socrates makes decisions in the here and now, however, is the *Crito*.

2.3 CRITO'S APPEAL

At *Crito* 44e1, Crito begins his appeal to Socrates to let him and others help Socrates to escape from prison. Few scholars analyze Crito's argument in detail.[21] Evaluating Crito's argument is important for our assessment of the rest of the dialogue. Some recent commentators have argued that Socrates' "Laws" speech at the end of the dialogue is ironic, and does not represent his real reasons for not leaving prison; they are reasons provided merely

[21] Crito's argument receives almost no discussion in Kraut's 1984 book-length study; Allen (1980), 67–70 focuses on the conventional Greek morality in Crito's argument for escape; Weiss (1998), ch. 3 devotes a whole chapter to discussing the character of Crito throughout Plato's dialogues, but neglects Crito's argument; Santas (1979), 11 devotes a paragraph. Brown (1992), 71–3, Stokes (2005), chs. 4–5, and White (1996), 103–6 are exceptions.

for the benefit of Crito, who would be unable to understand Socrates' real philosophical reasons.[22] Another argues further that the final argument is in fact superfluous: Socrates has already completed his argument that it is unjust to escape from prison *before* the Laws portion of the dialogue even begins, only Crito is too dull to understand it.[23] I think that careful consideration of Crito's argument, and Socrates' response, will reveal that many of the same reasons that Socrates appealed to in the *Apology* he appeals to again with Crito under the persona of the Laws. If this is so, then it would be unreasonable to dismiss these reasons as simply ad hominem, unless one wants to argue that Socrates is not providing real reasons for his actions during the defense speech either.[24]

Crito begins his appeal by anticipating a worry he imagines that Socrates might have about the expense and trouble that he and others will suffer for helping Socrates to escape. Crito uses the verb κλέπτειν ("to steal") to describe what they will do: they will "steal" Socrates out of prison (44e4). This verb clearly has a morally negative connotation. Crito, however, is not reluctant to use it to describe the action he proposes. Indeed he justifies his request for Socrates to forget about what cost his friends will incur, financial or otherwise, by claiming that he and the others "are surely right" (ἡμεῖς γὰρ που δίκαιοί ἐσμεν, 45a1–2) in running such risks to save him, and even greater ones if need be. So the simple fact that Crito is proposing to "steal" Socrates certainly does not by itself determine, at least as far as Crito is concerned, that it is wrong or unjust for Socrates to escape. Crito envisages the present circumstances as ones in which a person could "steal" (κλέπτειν) and nevertheless be right (δικαίος) in doing so.

[22] Miller (1996); Harte (1999). I agree with Lane's (1998) comparison between the structure of Socrates' argument in the *Crito* and Aristotle's practical syllogism; I argued independently for the same parallel in Vasiliou (1999b). But although it is structurally analogous, I believe that the major premise SV has a particular status, which causes the minor premise to be special as well. In the example from Aristotle (*NE* 7.3, 1147a29–31) the major premise "all sweets must be tasted" is a premise that contains no controversial ethical terms, so that the particular premise, to be grasped by perception, is something anyone with ordinary perception can apprehend. Lane claims (315) that Crito is similarly supposed to "perceive" the minor premise that to escape is to do wrong. But Socrates' major premise, SV, simply tells us that we must do the virtuous action – that leaves the central issue as yet undetermined: what *is* the virtuous action in the here and now? This is not simply a matter of "perception." Even if this is the way that the minor premise of an Aristotelian practical syllogism is apprehended, I find no evidence that Socrates believes that Crito ought simply to "see" the truth that escape is unjust. Indeed, on the interpretation I am defending Crito supplies an argument aimed precisely at *disputing* that minor premise. The Laws' argument, then, is not simply the result of "Crito's obduracy" (315), but forms a necessary reply to his argument.

[23] Weiss (1998). See Stokes (2005), ch. 2, for a different assessment of Crito.

[24] I do not know of anyone who attempts to read the *Apology* this way, and such a reading is not easily available to Harte, Miller, or Weiss, since, to varying degrees, they claim that the Laws' argument is aimed specifically at Crito.

Nothing in the text indicates that Socrates does not believe this as well. Certainly we might imagine a different Socrates making quick work of Crito's argument by interrupting just at this point: "Crito, you yourself have already admitted that you are proposing 'stealing' me away. Stealing is unjust and wrong. So I cannot be 'stolen away' from prison." The absence of such a response suggests that Socrates does not take stealing and justice to be necessarily incompatible. We should remember later that Crito uses this word, when Socrates uses ἀποδιδράσκειν ("to run away") at 50a7 to describe his escape. This too is a pejorative word, often used for runaway slaves. Socrates talks there of his "running away" (ἀποδιδράσκειν), "or whatever one should call it." We should not take this phrase as shorthand for a complete moral argument: "running away is immoral, by whatever name you call it, so don't try to deflect notice from the immorality of your action by trying to call it something else." This is not Socrates' argument; the fact that five Stephanus pages earlier Crito has already called the proposed action a case of "stealing" supports such a conclusion. As we shall see, Socrates argues at 50a7 that no matter what we *call* the proposed escape, the question is whether it is just or not. The quick and facile determination that Socrates' escape is unjust, based on a simple moral rule that either stealing or running away is wrong *tout court*, is not one entertained either by Socrates or Crito.[25]

This is closely connected to a common objection to Socratic ethics. Would Socrates never do an "unjust action," no matter how trivial, even if it led to, say, his saving hundreds of lives? In the Introduction I called such questions "moralizing" and we shall see that failing to appreciate the distinction between aiming and determining questions encourages it. A moralizing position preemptively takes a determining question to be settled. It presumes that we already know, for example, that purposefully telling a falsehood or escaping from prison is wrong. The harm of doing such a wrong is then compared with what we would allegedly gain by acting contrary to virtue. But as we shall see Socrates does not understand such actions as violating virtue in exchange for some other, "non-moral," goods. For Socrates (and Plato), there are not moral and non-moral goods: there are goods of the body, goods of the soul, and material goods. He and Crito must determine what constitutes the just action in their particular situation. As we shall see, a "moralizing" misreading has significant philosophical ramifications for understanding not only the structure and purpose of the argument in the *Crito*, but also the nature of Socratic deliberation.

[25] See Kraut (1984), 120–1.

Crito next points out that the money required is not a significant amount; the people who need to be paid off are cheap, and plenty of money is available (45a6–b5). Crito's money, which is entirely at Socrates' disposal, is sufficient. Further, if Socrates is worried about spending too much of Crito's money, others are ready to spend theirs: Simmias, who has brought money from Thebes for just this purpose, as well as Cebes. These are small details, but significant. They show, first, that Crito is not acting alone. If we are to criticize Crito for urging Socrates to commit an obviously immoral and un-Socratic act by paying his way out of prison, then we must include Simmias, Cebes, "and very many others" (45b5) in our condemnation. Indeed, in the *Apology* Plato depicts himself as the first of four, including Crito and his son Critoboulos, to offer money for a fine in a last-ditch attempt to avoid the death penalty (38b6–9). Plato too wished to prevent his friend's execution, and the *Apology* reference shows that he was willing to spend money to persuade the Athenians to spare Socrates' life. Of course offering a fine for the jury to accept is quite different from proposing a bribe to escape from prison illegally, and Plato does not explicitly include himself as part of this latter group.[26] The point here is simply that Crito is not a lone morally confused individual who is overcome by his love for Socrates. Crito is (assuming he is not lying) acting as an emissary for a group of people who desire and are willing to finance Socrates' escape, including such philosophically capable figures (judging by the *Phaedo* anyway) as Simmias and Cebes.[27]

What about Crito's mention of money and expense in the first place? Doesn't this by itself show that he, and perhaps Simmias and Cebes as well, are ignorant of what Socrates' real concerns would be? In this section of the text (45a6–b7) Crito is explaining that the financial burden of the escape will not be overwhelming, and that there are many people among whom the expense can be shared. I do not see why Socrates would treat this as irrelevant in itself. If Socrates believed that by escaping he would otherwise be doing no wrong, the effect it might have on the finances of his friends would be relevant in his deliberation about whether he should escape. If, for example, the financial cost of escaping involved ruining the livelihood of friends, that might indeed count against it. What Socrates will of course have no part of, as we shall see, is consideration of the financial cost *independently* of aiming at doing the just action or avoiding the unjust one.

[26] Although he does not rule it out: "and *very* many others" (ἄλλοι πολλοὶ πάνυ, 45b5).

[27] Weiss (1998) and others characterize Crito as particularly dull, causing Socrates to have to change his argument for Crito's benefit.

In 45b7–c4, Crito responds to a worry about exile that Socrates had himself raised in the *Apology* (37c–d). Crito assures Socrates that he can go to many places, in particular to Thessaly, where he will be welcomed and suffer no trouble. In the *Apology* (37c–38a), Socrates contemplates exile as a punishment, but rejects it on the grounds that wherever he goes he will talk to people as he always does and the youth will listen to him. Thus he would suffer the same fate as he has in Athens and end up being driven out of town after town. As we have seen, Socrates' rejection of exile as a proposed punishment in the *Apology* depends in part on consideration of his age, and in part on what would happen to him if he accepted exile. We will see in the argument of the Laws that Socrates considers exile in even more detail in response to Crito's remarks here. But the fact that Crito is clearly responding to a concern raised by Socrates himself in the *Apology* as a reason for rejecting exile – namely that he will be stuck wandering from town to town at seventy years old (since he is unable to keep quiet) – shows that Crito is not appealing to considerations that are foreign to Socrates' values. Indeed, these were some of Socrates' own points.

Crito's argument continues:

> Further, Socrates, you seem to me to be undertaking a thing that is not even just, but you are betraying yourself, when it is possible to save yourself, and you hasten the occurrence to you of such things which your enemies both would hasten and have hastened in their wish to destroy you. (45c5–8)

The strength of Crito's claim, and the argumentative burden it places on Socrates' response, is rarely adequately appreciated. Not only would it not be unjust to escape from prison, it would be positively unjust to remain there.[28] By remaining in prison Socrates is *doing* something unjust: it would be an unjust betrayal of oneself not to save yourself when you can. The idea that Socrates betrays himself, and thereby acts unjustly and does himself wrong, is a form of argument again familiar from Socrates in the *Apology*. There he expresses an unwillingness "to do himself an injustice" during the penalty phase of speech by saying he deserves some punishment when he

[28] Brown (1992), 71–3, unlike most, does look at Crito's argument in some detail, and correctly sees that a concern with injustice is central to his account. He presents Crito's view, however, as saying that Socrates would be justified in escaping. I argue that Crito makes an even stronger claim: it would be acting unjustly for Socrates *not* to escape. If we fail to understand that Crito is making this claim, we shall fail to understand why the Laws bring up all of the points they do. Irwin (1995), 45 refers to Crito's claim as saying that remaining would be "unjust." White (1996), 97, 105, 109 clearly sees that Crito argues that justice itself *requires* Socrates to escape, and not only that he thinks escape is justifiable. But White draws conclusions from this about the nature and purpose of the Laws' argument and about the *Crito* as a whole that are far from mine. See too Stokes (2005), 47.

does not (37b3–5). Crito should be understood, then, as again raising an argument that has a precedent with Socrates.

Crito follows the charge that Socrates is betraying himself with the accusation that by remaining in prison Socrates also betrays his sons, whom he has an obligation to care for, and who will now suffer the fate of orphans. Crito's conclusion is that Socrates is choosing the "easiest path" (45d6), and that he ought instead to make the choice of a man who is "good and brave" (ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἀνδρεῖος), especially "when he has claimed that he cares for virtue his whole life" (45d6–7).[29] Viewed in context, then, Socrates' betrayal of himself and his sons are, by Crito's lights, the reasons that his remaining in prison is indeed unjust, and not the action of a good and brave man. Of course, this charge runs smack against Socrates' central moral principle, SV, and his argument in the *Apology* that he has always acted in accordance with it.

Crito has been heavily criticized for the final part of his speech. After making an explicitly Socratic point – that what Socrates is doing is contrary to virtue – he ruins it by raising questions about reputation and about how he and his friends will seem to others if they do nothing. Crito says that he will be ashamed (45e1) on behalf of Socrates and all of his friends if Socrates is put to death, for they will be thought to have let this happen through a "lack of courage" (45e2, e6). Many commentators have noted that Crito is worried about how he and his friends will look if Socrates is killed. Their reputations will suffer because they have not been able to show traditional Athenian excellence by having the power to save their friend's life, when it is reasonably easy to do so; Crito and his clique will be disgraced. As with the earlier mention of money and safe places to stay, it might seem that Crito has once again lost track of considerations that would be of any importance to Socrates.

These points are certainly partly accurate about Crito, but I do not think that he has lost his way entirely. As we shall see, Socrates will need to adjust and focus Crito's concerns, but his problem is not that he brings in intrinsically irrelevant or un-Socratic considerations, but that he does not keep the aim of acting virtuously (and not acting viciously) supreme in his deliberation. By themselves Crito's references to shame and reputation are more reasonable and Socratic than they are typically taken to be. First, we need to pay attention to the fact that they occur in the context of an overall

[29] It is striking that Crito sees virtue here as one aim among many, and so describes Socrates as someone who has cared about virtue his whole life, but there is no "above all" in his description. It is as though virtue were one goal among many that Socrates has had. This will be important when we look at Socrates' response.

argument about what Socrates should do, albeit an emotional one. They immediately follow his claim that Socrates is not doing the right thing, not doing what a good and courageous man would do, and what a man who has cared for virtue his whole life would do. If Crito is right that it is unjust for Socrates to remain in prison, then he is right to worry that he will act shamefully and cowardly if he does not save Socrates. Concern with how one appears is not entirely irrelevant to the Socratic way of thinking, provided, as Socrates will make explicit, that one is concerned with how one *justly* appears, that is, how one would appear to a truly just and brave person. So *if* Crito is right that the truly brave, just, and good action is for Socrates to escape, then he is right to fear the disgrace at failing to do what is right. Crito's argument may be too quick, then, insofar as he has not adequately *determined* that Socrates' remaining in prison is in fact unjust, cowardly, and bad, but he is not simply appealing to considerations that are irrelevant or worse. Secondly, Crito sums up his speech by urging Socrates to consider whether his failure to escape would turn out to be both bad and shameful for himself and his friends (46a3–4). The idea that the wrong action is both bad and shameful is familiar to Socrates, who uses these terms in the *Apology* (e.g., 28b ff.) and *Gorgias*, where he argues that acting unjustly is always both bad and shameful (e.g., 474c ff.).

Further evidence that the considerations that Crito raises are not simply off the mark is that, as we have seen, Socrates raises many of the same ones in the *Apology*, including the question of reputation. He thinks he would destroy his own reputation as someone who is distinguished in virtue by begging from the jury, and he urges the other citizens of Athens not to "wrap the city in shame" (αἰσχύνην τῇ πόλει περιάπτειν, 35a8) by behaving in such a way. He himself appeals to shame several times, asking the Athenians whether they are not ashamed to care about their bodies and wealth more than their souls (29d9). We should see Crito's appeal to reputation and disgrace as similar, and indeed as purposefully throwing back at Socrates his own reasons and arguments from the *Apology*.

Crito, then, despite his obvious eagerness and his anxiety about the lack of time left to them to act (46a4–7), nevertheless frames his speech around the claim that he and the rest of his companions are urging the right course of action (45a1) and that Socrates will act in the wrong way by remaining in prison. In the argument that follows we shall see that all of Crito's points, even the ones that are typically dismissed as being irrelevant to Socratic deliberation, are addressed. Socrates must focus Crito's considerations and make sure that they are being looked at according to SV. But we shall see that, while Socrates thinks that one should never simply aim at saving one's

children or one's life, neither should one simply aim at not running away or keeping an agreement or acting legally. If he thought this, the simple fact that he was escaping against the law would be sufficient to show that such an action would be wrong. The key concept will once again be the idea of an aim. All of these factors – one's children's fate, one's own, the keeping of agreements, the fact of escaping, even Socrates' age – will be relevant considerations in a deliberation the aim of which is to do the virtuous action (or to avoid wrongdoing). Crito's argument *is* flawed, but its flaw is that in his eagerness he has not been careful to commit to SV as the explicit aim of their action. Rather, when push comes to shove, Crito appears to be aiming simply to save Socrates' life, whether or not it is truly the virtuous action. While Crito's love for Socrates may be moving, it clearly violates SV.

In the end, of course, Socrates will show that he thinks that Crito is wrong: escaping from prison is in fact the unjust action, and so he must not do it. It will take a bit of argument – and argument that one could reasonably dispute – to establish Socrates' conclusions. I shall argue that by the end of the *Crito* we can still plausibly wonder whether escaping from prison was in fact wrong. Crito, like most people, allows aims other than virtue to govern his actions, especially at times of crisis. Socrates does not have substantive knowledge of what virtue is: as he will say, he can only follow the argument that seems best to him upon reflection (46b4–6). What *is* in his power, and what he makes sure to do and to make Crito do as well, is to adhere unwaveringly to SV, and not to aim instead at saving his life or at anything else. Whether his final decision is indeed correct he cannot know for sure, since he does not know what virtue is.[30] But he can know that he acted according to SV and thus that he acted like a good man. If he ends up in fact doing wrong, he has not done it intentionally but through ignorance.

2.4 SOCRATES' RESPONSE

Socrates responds to Crito's speech by first noting its emotional tone, and the danger inherent in such enthusiasm: Crito's zeal (ἐπιθυμία) is worth a lot, if it has some "right aim" (μετὰ τινος ὀρθότητος; Gallop's trans.), but if it does not, the greater the zeal the more difficult it will be to handle (46b1–4). Socrates' conclusion, however, is that they must consider whether

[30] Unless he can understand non-interference from his divine sign as definitive evidence that he is not doing wrong. But, as I have noted, he does not mention the divine sign at all in the *Crito*.

they should do what Crito proposes or not. There is no sign that Socrates does not recognize Crito as having put forward a serious argument. Crito's anxiousness to act – and to act that very night (46a6) – adds to the danger that they may act too quickly and so do the wrong thing, but as we have seen his appeal has been more than merely emotional. Socrates tells Crito that he is the sort of person who always obeys the argument (λόγος) that after consideration seems to him best, and that he values the same principles (λόγοι) as before (46b5–c1). He next divides his subsequent conversation with Crito, until the point where the "Laws" enter (50a6), into two discussions aimed at determining whether two different principles (λόγοι), which have seemed best to Socrates in the past, remain "well said" (46b8, 46e2, 47a2: ἱκανῶς λέγεσθαι, 47a5) in the present circumstances.

The first principle (46c7 [πρῶτον] – 48b4) – that one should listen to the opinions of some people (the ones who know) and not others – specifically addresses what Crito was saying about reputation (46c7–8). Socrates does not dismiss concern with reputation as absolutely irrelevant. Rather, he does what he said he would do at the beginning of his speech: he determines whether it has a correct aim. Caring about your reputation is fine, as long as you care about your reputation from the perspective of the few who know, not of the many. One needs to pay attention to good opinions, not bad ones, and good ones are the opinions of those who know.

In Crito's more extended discussion of reputation and feeling ashamed (45d8–46a2) he does not explicitly say that he would feel ashamed before the ignorant many, or would acquire a bad reputation among the many, in contrast to his earlier remarks (44c–d). In the earlier passage, Crito does refer to the opinion of the many, but Socrates dismisses their opinion as itself (that is, qua majority opinion) carrying little weight, because they do not have the power to make a person good or bad – presumably because they lack the knowledge of what makes a person good or bad. Crito concedes this (44e1) and throughout the later passage uses only impersonal constructions – for example, "I would be ashamed lest it appear . . ." (45e1–2) – that do not specify before whom he would be ashamed. As we discussed above, Crito's appeal to shame and reputation is sandwiched between the claims that Socrates is not acting virtuously, in one case, by remaining in prison and, in the other, by allowing himself to be put to death (45d6–8 and 46a3–4). If we interpret Crito's argument sympathetically, as I think Socrates does, he attaches consideration of reputation in his main speech to the claim that Socrates is not acting rightly by remaining in prison. If it is indeed true (as Crito maintains) that it is wrong for Socrates to stay in prison, then even by Socrates' lights it would be reasonable and appropriate for Crito to worry

about the reputation he and Socrates would rightly acquire from someone who knew what the right thing to do is. Socrates is making sure that it is not reputation per se that is important, but the reputation one acquires from the right people – people who know what is right and wrong.[31]

Moreover, when Socrates makes the choice explicit between paying attention to the opinion of the many who don't know and the opinion of one who does, Crito has no particular reason to balk or to worry about his argument for escape because it still rests on the claim that escape is the right thing to do. By the end of this first *logos* Crito should not think that his substantive argument has been undermined to any extent. Given that according to Crito the truth is that it is right for Socrates to escape, the opinion of the one they should value – the knower's opinion – should agree with Crito's.

Note too that Crito agrees that one should listen only to the person who knows, "*if there is one who knows*" (47d1–2). The if-clause seems to refer back to Socrates' earlier claim that he always acts on the *logos* that seems best to him (46b3–6). Socrates is not claiming to be a moral expert;[32] he does not have the techne-knowledge of virtue that the sophists profess, so, in the absence of any moral expert with them, he and Crito will have to decide based on the *logos* that seems best to them.[33] This is important because in the end we might want to disagree with Socrates and to claim that his argument for staying in prison was not right after all. I think Plato leaves this option open for the reader. Socrates must act that very night, so he remains in prison having acted, as always, according to SV, but at the same time, as always, having acted in a way that might be in fact wrong.[34]

Before this first *logos* ends, Socrates adds a crucial point. To illustrate the truth of his claim that one should listen only to those who know, he draws an analogy with physical training. In training one should heed the advice only of an expert doctor or trainer regarding what "ought to be done in

[31] *Ap*. 25b ff. makes the same point in less abstract terms: the many are ignorant about any particular subject you might choose, while those who know are few.

[32] Contrary to Grote (1875), 1, 308 and Vlastos (1985/1994), 47–8; in agreement with Kahn (1996), 103–4. See Beversluis (2000), 228, n. 21 for criticism of Vlastos.

[33] We might note how frequent the uses of δοκεῖ and φαίνεται are here. Socrates says he follows the *logos* that seems best to him (46b6), and he asks Crito over and over throughout the dialogue how the argument "seems to him": e.g., 46e2, 47a2, 48b4, 48d6, 49e1, 49e4, 51c5. This lessens the force of the claim (see Miller [1996]) that Socrates' final remark, that he "seems" to hear the *logos* of the Laws (54d2–7), is supposed to indicate some sort of irony or hesitancy. All along he and Crito have agreed to go with the argument that seems best to them, without that carrying any force of illusion. It stems, rather, from the acknowledgement that there is no moral expert present and so they will have to rely, as a second best, on what appears to them (i.e. what they believe) to be just.

[34] Again, the only safeguard against this is the divine sign. See discussion above, 2.2.

acting, exercising, eating, and drinking [πρακτέον καὶ γυμναστέον καὶ ἐδεστέον γε καὶ ποτέον]" (47b9–10). The person who doesn't listen to the expert, but follows the lead of the ignorant many, will be harmed. Socrates then asks Crito about the part of such a person that would be harmed (47c1–6). Crito of course answers, "the body." In the example it is the expert who makes the determination about which *actions* are correct; it is the doing of truly healthy actions that produces a healthy good body, and the doing of unhealthy actions that generates the contrary. Socrates then moves on to cases concerning "just and unjust, shameful and fine, and good and bad matters." Here too we should look for the one who knows (if there is such a person), since if we do not follow the guidance of one who knows we will corrupt and maltreat "that which becomes better by justice, but is destroyed by injustice" (47d4–5). Without explicitly using the word "soul," Crito here agrees that the soul is an "independent locus of harm and benefit." That is, the soul is something that can be harmed or benefited entirely independently of any harm or benefit to one's body or gain or loss of one's material possessions. This is an important and more controversial claim than it first appears. I discussed it briefly in the Introduction, and we shall see in chapter three that it is challenged by Polus in the *Gorgias*. What's more, it is clear that the claim here is that engaging in just actions makes the soul "better," that is, more virtuous. We have then, very briefly, a statement of the "habituation principle," the idea that it is the performance of actions of a certain sort that generates a character or soul of a corresponding sort. As I said in the Introduction, I am arguing that this is a central aspect of Plato's ethics. The habituation principle functions here as a crucial part of a quick argument for SV, an argument that will be greatly elaborated and defended in the *Gorgias* and *Republic*.[35] For now, we need only note that Crito agrees to three things: (1) the soul is an independent locus of harm and benefit (like the body); (2) the welfare of the soul is much more worthwhile than the welfare of the body (48a3); (3) a virtuous soul is generated by engaging in virtuous actions (an instance of the habituation principle). Therefore one must always avoid acting contrary to virtue above all so that one does not harm the most important part of oneself. Thus we have the framework of an argument for SV, which Crito simply accepts.[36]

Unlike other commentators' accounts of this argument, I explain it without reference to any concept of "happiness." We should pursue virtue above all because engaging in virtuous actions creates the best state of the most valuable part of ourselves. Although this is certainly not an unassailable

[35] See, esp., 3.8, 7.2–3, 8.1. [36] See especially Irwin (1995), §30 and Vlastos (1991), ch. 8.

argument, it proceeds without using any substantive account of happiness. Socrates surely agrees that living with the most important part of oneself ruined is not a happy life. But it is not as though this claim is doing the substantive work; it is not as though the argument is about whether living one's life with a corrupt soul is a *happy* life or not. I do not see how one could concede (1)–(3) and not accept the conclusion. Each of these claims individually, however, might be open to dispute.[37] Further, there remains the glaring question, raised at this point in the text, of how we determine what the virtuous actions are, given the absence of any expert. Cleitophon's worry arises urgently here: if we accept (1)–(3), Socrates has just given us an argument for SV, but, without an account of what virtue is, we run the ultimate risk that we may be ruining our souls by engaging in the wrong actions. Another objector might concede (1) and (3) and reject (2) – why is the state of soul so important? We can, if we like, conceive of these questions as questions about the relationship between virtue and happiness, but in fact the claims are much more specific than a general dispute about whether virtue is essential to living well.

The second *logos* is established quickly, in six brief lines. Socrates says that what must be valued most of all (περὶ πλείστου ποιητέον) is not simply to live, but to live well, where living well (τὸ εὖ ζῆν) is the same as living nobly (καλῶς) and living justly (δικαίως) (48b5–6). The construction περὶ πλείστου/περὶ πλείονος ποιεῖσθαι is important. It occurs at two other places in the *Crito*: 44c2–3 and 54b3.[38] I shall discuss the latter passage below. In the former Crito is making the claim that he will acquire a bad reputation for seeming to "value money more than friends" (χρήματα περὶ πλείονος ποιεῖσθαι ἢ φίλους). I submit that in all three passages this construction is a way of expressing the concept of an aim. To say what you "make more of" or "attach more value to" is to say which aim or end you hold higher than another. To say what you "attach the *most* value to" is

[37] I shall argue in 3.4 that Polus is unable to get to (2) because he does not even understand (1).

[38] The expression occurs four times in the *Apology*. At 21e5 Socrates is relating his investigation of the oracle and has just described his experience with questioning public figures. Despite his growing unpopularity, he says that he thought he should "attach the highest value" (περὶ πλείστου ποιεῖσθαι) to the business of the god. At 24d1 he asks Meletus whether he attaches the highest value to the young being as good as possible. At 30a2, as we saw in chapter one, he reprimands the citizens for attaching the least value to the things of greatest importance – virtue and wisdom – and attaching more value to baser things – prodigious wealth, honor, and glory. At 32e4, considered earlier in this chapter, Socrates says that anyone who attaches the highest value to justice will never survive in public life. We can see that in these passages these phrases are best understood as associated with the concept of an aim or goal. See also *Theaetetus* 150a6, which occurs in the midwifery passage. Socrates complains there that people "attach more value" to lies than to truth. Cf. also *Rep*. 540e1 and 554a2, where the oligarchic figure is described as "attaching the greatest value to money" (precisely what Crito is worried about being accused of at 44c2–3).

to state what end you take to be supreme. Here Socrates says that living virtuously is supreme. As in the *Apology*, we should not interpret this as saying that simply being alive is unimportant, or that life and death are never to be taken into consideration in one's deliberations. Rather, it says that one must deliberate always with the aim of living well, that is, justly, that is, virtuously; in other words, it is a formulation of SV. Crito agrees to SV, then, as a *logos* that remains the same, and against which he has nothing to say.

There may seem, however, to be a large obstacle to this reading immediately ahead in the text. Securing Crito's agreement to these *logoi*, Socrates then says that they must determine whether it is just for him to escape from prison or not. If it seems to them to be just, they will attempt it, but if not, they will let it go. Socrates' commitment to SV, which he will proceed to formulate in several versions over the next Stephanus page, ties the deliberation regarding escape to the aim of acting justly. It is in this context, immediately after gaining assent to the claim that living well is what "must be valued most of all," that Socrates says the following (I translate very literally):

> Those topics [σκέψεις] which you are talking about – about [περὶ] the expenditure of money, reputation, and the nurturing of children – take care, Crito, lest these subjects [σκέμματα] belong to those who would kill and then resurrect easily, if they were able, without any understanding, namely, to the many. (48c2–6)

Interpretation of this passage is critical for those who claim that the Laws' position cannot be identical to Socrates'. They argue that since the Laws *do* indeed end up discussing money, reputation, and the care of Socrates' children, they must not share Socrates' "value system" since Socrates here dismisses these considerations as irrelevant.[39] Socrates is not thinking of these, however, as "considerations." Given the immediate context, the issue is *about what* (περὶ τί) *we must act*, to put it very awkwardly in English but to reflect the Greek. Περὶ τί questions are about *ends*. For example, in the *Gorgias* Socrates asks repeatedly what Gorgias' craft *is about* (περὶ τί): that is, what its distinct product and end is (e.g., 449d–e).[40] What is wrong with the many is *not* that they *consider* factors like money, reputation, and

[39] See Harte (1999), 129; Miller (1996), 123. I noted earlier in the chapter that we have precisely the same tension at work in the *Apology*, for Socrates mentions the very same subjects in a context where he repeatedly emphasizes that the jury ought to make a just decision. In the case of the *Apology*, however, such points are typically dismissed as rhetoric. Until the work of Harte, Miller, and Weiss the same had been said about the inclusion of such topics in the speech of the Laws.

[40] This construction occurs throughout the dialogues of definition as well, when Socrates seeks the περὶ τί of the different virtues on analogy with the περὶ τί of the different crafts.

children in their deliberations about what to do.[41] Rather, it is that they take these topics to be what their actions are *about*, that is, what the *aim* of their actions is. Instead of focusing on whether or not they are acting justly, the many take the subject and goal of their action to be, say, saving money, or saving a person's life. These are worth nothing *as aims*, according to Socrates, when compared with virtue. Nevertheless, these things are precisely the things one must argue about in order to determine what the just action in fact *is*.

Consider the following quotation from a paper by Verity Harte ([1999], 133), which I shall use as representative of an opposing interpretation:

> Socrates cashes out justice solely in terms of its effect on an individual's soul: justice is what benefits the soul. Of course, just acts may involve others, but here at least Socrates has nothing to say on this front. A fortiori, there is no suggestion that others – and their relation to the agent in question – have a role to play in determining the justice of an action. For Crito, by contrast, the justice of an agent's action is differently assessed according as it relates to other specific groups: friends, enemies and family.

On my reading the problem is not that Crito assesses justice in a different way than Socrates. Rather Crito, like most people, mistakenly elevates other *aims* above acting justly (or not acting unjustly), particularly at times of stress. As we have seen, after Crito's argument for escape, Socrates says that he wants to consider whether the things they held previously remain well said (46b ff.). He then teases Crito by saying that since Crito is not likely to die tomorrow, the current disaster will not lead him astray in the argument (46e3–47a2). Of course, the opposite is the case: Socrates is the one who remains committed to SV, even in the face of his own death, while Crito's love for Socrates causes him to want to save Socrates' life more than anything else; that is, he "attaches the highest value to" saving Socrates rather than to acting virtuously.

Harte is of course correct that the *value* of just action is to be explained by its effect on one's soul. For Socrates and Plato the condition of one's soul is of supreme importance, and the soul is made excellent by doing excellent actions, and correspondingly ruined by doing bad actions. Socrates is clear that his sole aim will be to do the just action, and this is indeed, as Harte says and as Socrates has just established with Crito (47c8–48a5), because harm to the soul is harm that is far worse than any harm to one's body or

[41] As we have seen, Socrates himself does this in the *Apology* (and will do so again later in the *Crito* in the persona of "the Laws").

possessions.[42] But this is *by no means sufficient* to resolve Socrates' present predicament. He must make a concrete decision here and now: should he escape from prison this very night, or not? SV by itself, even together with the understanding that it alone holds the key to true benefit (that is, benefit to the soul), will not be enough to settle the case even for the most committed Socratic. SV tells one not to aim to save his life, help his children, benefit the state, aid his friends, or anything else above doing what is virtuous. But how will the virtuous course of action be *determined*? Socrates might "cash out" the *value* of just action in terms of its effects on the soul,[43] but what would it mean to determine what the just action is by its effects on the soul? And this is precisely the situation that Socrates faces in the *Crito*. How can he determine what the just action is, and thereby safeguard his soul from the harm that would be caused by doing an injustice?

Rather than rushing headlong into a decision as Crito is pushing him to do, he *first* pauses and clarifies to himself and to Crito that the supreme aim of their action must be to act virtuously (that is, he confirms their joint commitment to SV). But *then* he must turn to the question of whether escaping from prison is indeed virtuous or not. And he cannot do *this* by looking at what benefits his soul. Harte says Socrates has "nothing to say on this front": if we believe that the Laws' arguments are also Socrates', then, on the contrary, Socrates has lots to say on this front. And if we deny this, as Harte does, on what basis does Socrates believe that escape is unjust? His belief that justice benefits the soul, and that the state of one's soul is of paramount importance, is of no help whatsoever. Harte claims that there is no suggestion that relationships between the agent and others have anything to do with determining the justice of an action. How then *is* the justice of an action determined? The only way Socrates has of determining whether an action is just or not, in the absence of a moral expert (which he explicitly is not) or of any help from his *daimonion* (who does not appear in the *Crito*), is as he says by following the argument that seems best to him. But what will an argument about what the just act is be about, if it is not about the relationship between the agent and others?

Although I have focused on Harte's argument here, she is not alone in her reasoning. In fact, as I have been arguing, it is the typical understanding

[42] I think that the "worse" here is meant not simply quantitatively, but also that harm to the soul is *sui generis*. Recall 48a3–4: the soul is πολὺ τιμιώτερον than the body.

[43] That is, it goes some distance towards answering the question: why ought I to be just? But this is not the question at issue. Crito and Socrates agree that a person should be just, and Socrates has just gotten Crito to agree to SV. The question they face is: what *is* the just (or unjust) action here and now?

of Socrates' claim that virtue is most important. Commentators interpret Socrates' claim this way because they see justice or virtue *as one consideration among many* in deliberation about what to do. I have said that this may be so in an "aiming deliberation," but that is not what is going on in the *Crito*. The question is not whether justice or money or life ought to be one's *supreme aim*: Socrates and Crito both agree to SV. The question is rather what *is* the just action here and now. And in a deliberation of this sort – a determining deliberation that seeks to determine what the just action is – money, life, and the relations to others will be relevant as considerations. Indeed, I do not know what it would be to consider the justice of an action *without* considering things like the effects of the action on others, whether it causes them pleasure or pain, deprives them of property, causes people's death, and so on.

48c2–6, then, simply rules out taking anything other than virtue to be what acting is "about" understood as what the *aim* of our acting should be. It does not, however, rule out taking things like our relationships to ourselves and to others as considerations in our deliberations about what the virtuous action actually is. What does it mean to say, as everyone would say, that Socrates does not value his children more than justice? It means that Socrates aims to act justly above aiming to act in such a way as to save his children's lives. But it cannot plausibly mean that Socrates does not take the welfare of his children into consideration at all when determining what the just action is. How could Socrates be a just person and never consider the effects of his actions on himself or others? To say that he takes into account only the best condition of his soul and the souls of others is simply to forestall the question I am interested in and which I think has been generally overlooked. His soul and the soul of every person will be benefited by just action and harmed by unjust action. But in order to act justly, and see that others act justly, he must figure out what the just action is, and he cannot do *this* by reminding himself yet again that justice is the most important thing for his soul.

I have emphasized, and perhaps belabored, this issue because it is a central part of the book. A proper understanding of Socratic deliberation, and its attempt to settle a determining question, will influence our readings of the dialogues to follow.

2.5 SV IN THE *CRITO*

In 48b–50a, Socrates presents Crito with SV, formulated in a variety of ways. The explicit parallels with the *Apology* are striking:

For us, however, since the principle [ὁ λόγος] demands it, nothing else must be looked at [σκεπτέον] except that which we were now speaking about: whether we – both the ones who are rescued and the rescuers themselves – shall be doing just things by paying money to and doing favors for those who would get me out of here; or whether in truth we shall be acting unjustly by doing all these things. And if it is manifest that we are acting unjustly, we must not take into consideration at all [μὴ οὐ . . .] either whether we must die by waiting here and keeping quiet, or whether we must suffer[44] anything else before acting unjustly. (*Cr.* 48c6–d5)

First we should note again that Socrates here follows the *logos* that appears best to him; there is no appeal to a moral expert. Second, the passage recalls the language and content of *Ap.* 28d8–10.[45] Socrates is clearly talking about an "aiming deliberation": given a (correct) judgement that a certain action is not virtuous, nothing else should be "looked at" as competing with this. Of course, as I have been arguing, *whether* escaping is unjust has yet to be determined. After Socrates gets Crito's agreement on SV, he then goes on to formulate this principle variously as "it is never right to do injustice [ἀδικεῖν]" (49a4–6, 49b8), "it is never right to do wrong [κακουργεῖν]" (49c2) and also "it is never right to act badly [κακῶς ποιεῖν]" (49a7–8). Richard Kraut has argued that these three expressions, ἀδικεῖν, κακουργεῖν, and κακῶς ποιεῖν, are meant to be understood as equivalent.[46] All of the different formulations are simply alternative expressions of the aiming principle, SV. As Kraut realizes, "it is never right to do wrong" cannot be regarded either as a simple tautology nor can it be understood to rule out causing, for example, physical harm to someone.[47] Socrates was a brave soldier, and he cites his actions in battle as examples of his doing the right thing (*Ap.* 28d–e). He surely caused physical harm to people in the process. Socrates' point here is to isolate the "ethical" dimension of words like "harm" and "do wrong." As we have seen, the principle "it is never right to do wrong" is an expression of SV when it functions as a limiting condition on our actions.[48]

We are now in position to understand better the common remark that the final argument in the *Crito*, undertaken with "the Laws," is "based on" the principle that it is never right to do wrong. This is true, but only of a practical syllogism which has the aiming principle SV as its major premise. The argument proceeds as follows:

[44] Socrates is already setting up one important aspect of the Laws' argument to follow: that, contrary to what Crito has argued, the Laws are insisting that his remaining in prison is not *doing* an injustice, but only *suffering* one. See below.

[45] Discussed in chapter one.

[46] Kraut (1984), ch. 1.

[47] Kraut (1984), 27, n. 4.

[48] See Introduction.

(1) One must never act unjustly (SV).
(2) Escaping from prison here and now would be to act unjustly (the eventual conclusion of the argument with the Laws).
(3) Therefore, Socrates must not escape from prison.

What (1) has done in this argument is only to rule out all values other than right and wrong as counting as aims for acting one way or the other. When Crito assents to SV, he has confined himself to assessing Socrates' actions on one supreme dimension of value: virtue. Before the substantive discussion begins, then, wealth, reputation, and even pursuing life and avoiding death are ruled out *as competing goals*, but not, I have been arguing, *as considerations* in a deliberation about what the just action is here and now. Further, we should note that Socrates calls SV here the "first principle" (ἀρχή) of their inquiry (48e5; 49d9; see also 49d6 ἀρχώμεθα). SV is the first principle that will govern the investigation to follow. All of the *substantive, determining* deliberation, however, takes place in the argument of the Laws. Crito's agreement to (1) goes no distance at all towards determining whether Socrates should escape or not; it only tells us what the overall aim of the deliberation must be.[49] We can call (1) a "principle" and translate λόγος in this way (as almost all translators and commentators do), but we should be clear that it is an aiming principle.

Once Crito has agreed with SV, he has agreed to assess the correctness of Socrates' escape solely in terms of whether it is indeed the just action or not. If the action is not just then, no matter what Socrates and his friends will suffer by not escaping, they must not escape. The next principle Socrates establishes is that one must abide by an agreement one makes "when the things [agreed upon] are just" (49e6). As others have noted, Socrates does not mean here that one should do an act, even if that act is unjust, simply because one has agreed to it.[50] Socrates then poses the crucial question: will they be acting badly (κακῶς) by escaping and indeed breaking agreements to do things which are just? Crito replies that he does not have an answer to this question, "for I don't know" (οὐ γὰρ ἐννοῶ, 50a4–5). Crito is not simply being thick. He surely suspects that Socrates is against escaping, which prompted his initial long and urgent speech. But he has argued

[49] *Contra* Weiss (1998), esp. ch. 4, who argues that Socrates is able to make the substantive judgement that escaping from prison would be unjust *before* any of the reasons adduced by "the Laws." This is part of Weiss' overall argument that what "the Laws" say is not what Socrates himself believes. Obviously my account interprets the *Crito* very differently. I will here emphasize only that the issues are distinct. One could hold that the argument of "the Laws" is not Socrates' own but still believe that he needs *some* further argument to come to his final conclusion not to escape. See Pakaluk (2000) for further discussion.

[50] See, e.g., Harte (1999), 125. She goes on to argue, however, that this *is* the Laws' position.

that not escaping is in fact unjust and he has no reason to think that the argument has, thus far, ruled out his conclusion. Crito can concede that they will follow the *logos* that seems best to them, and that the opinion of the majority, simply qua majority, ought to carry no weight. He can also concede SV, with its supporting claims that the soul is "much more honorable" than the body and that just action benefits the soul and unjust action corrupts it. At this point in the argument Crito can still hold that escape is indeed the just action, and that it would be wrong to remain and be executed; for they do not yet know whether Socrates has entered into an agreement at all, on what terms he has entered an agreement, or whether the agreement is to do just things. And as Socrates himself has said, if it is just for him to escape, then he will attempt escape. Determining this question is the indispensable role that the argument of the Laws will play.[51]

2.6 THE LAWS' STARTING ASSUMPTIONS

The Laws[52] begin their discussion with the following claim: Socrates' escape is an action that contributes to the destruction of the Laws and of the "whole city" to the extent that one individual can (50a9–b2).[53] Socrates' proposed

[51] At this point, Harte asks: "[D]o the Laws, like Socrates, think that agreements are binding only if what they require of one is itself just? I shall argue that they do not" (126). This stands for Harte as part of the argument that the Laws represent a distinct value system from Socrates' since the Laws disagree with this principle. But I shall show in what follows (1) that Harte does not discuss an important distinction in the argument between doing and suffering injustice (Kraut [1984], 85–6 discusses the doing versus suffering distinction; DeFilippo [1991], 257–60 argues that the Laws' remarks that one must "do whatever we command" focus exclusively on *suffering* injustices and is silent about the idea of the Laws commanding someone to *do* injustice; see below) and (2) that the Laws argue for the substantive conclusion that the things Socrates has agreed to are in fact just. If Harte's interpretation were correct there would be no reason for the Laws to do this; the simple fact that Socrates had made an agreement would be sufficient. The Laws do indeed establish this, but they also do what Socrates' principle requires: they argue that the things Socrates has agreed to do are just. And it is this part of their argument that carries the decisive weight for Socrates, given the agreed commitment to SV.

[52] We might ask why Plato has Socrates engage in this final speech using the device of "the Laws." Why doesn't he make the argument *in propria persona*? Any answer is inevitably speculative. I suggest two motivations. First, from the perspective of the inner frame, putting the argument in the mouth of the Laws would help to make the argument more palatable to Crito, for whom Socrates obviously cares. By speaking through the Laws Socrates is able to be on Crito's side and consider together with him what the Laws might say. If he presented the argument against Crito in his own voice, it would be much more adversarial. Second, from the perspective of the outer frame, Plato is clearly interested in the questions of political philosophy that are raised in the Laws' arguments. What are the duties and proper relationship of a citizen to the state? By presenting the argument in the persona of the Laws, its nature as political philosophy is highlighted and it shows that there are larger issues here beyond the immediately pressing one of whether Socrates should escape from prison or not. Political philosophy is of course a dominant theme in Plato's work throughout his lifetime: see *Crito*, *Republic*, *Statesman*, and *Laws*.

[53] There is repeated mention that Socrates' destruction of the Laws by his escape would be limited to the effects of one person: 54c8 and 51a5.

escape does this, the Laws reason, because no polis could exist and not be turned upside down (ἀνατετράφθαι)[54] if its judgements (δίκαι) did not have force and could be nullified and destroyed by individual, private, citizens. I take this point to be presented by the Laws as a political fact about the necessary conditions for the possibility of a civilized society. If people are to live together under some system of government, the laws and judgements of the government must have force and not simply be ignored at will by individuals. Therefore, if Socrates knowingly and purposefully proposes to violate the city's laws, he to that extent participates in the destruction and undermining of the city itself. There are a number of important points to make here. First, I think this claim is taken as given and not disputed by Socrates or Crito. They agree immediately to it, taking it as a fact about the reality of political society. Since they do this, the Laws do not devote any more argument to it in what follows. They have established it as true in the one sentence discussed above (50b2–5). Second, when Socrates asks Crito what they will say to this, and to the many more things that could be said about it, "especially by an orator" (50b7), all he means is that the case for the necessity of the existence of laws which have binding force for a society could be, if necessary, elaborated on to a great extent. The reference to "an orator" suggests that in court, which of course is one of the central arenas for orators, an orator would be the one to develop in detail and stress to a jury that a society cannot exist without binding laws, and so a person cannot simply be allowed to violate them with impunity.[55] If a society permits its citizens to violate laws without punishment, then the society itself will cease to exist. In addition, if these points are correct, then the Laws are not speaking exclusively as the Laws of Athens. It is certainly true that at several places in the remainder of the speech the Laws do speak specifically as the Laws of Athens, but I think that they *begin* with a general claim about laws and their relationship to society. The view asserted here (as I shall show in some of the substantive argument that follows) is one about the necessary conditions for human beings to live, as Aristotle says, as political animals. Without laws with binding force, there would be no polis.

[54] This word can mean "to be overthrown," but I hesitate to translate it that way insofar as "to be overthrown" can suggest that one form of government is toppled and replaced by another, which I do not think that the Laws intend here. The idea is captured by the more literal sense of the verb as "to turn upside down"; the city would be toppled, but not replaced by anything else that could be called a city or government.

[55] Weiss (1998), 86–7 claims, without warrant in my view, that "by linking what the Laws say with what an orator would say, Socrates decisively dissociates himself from the speech of the Laws." See also White (1996), 114ff. Ober (1998), 180–1 considers the political importance of the remark.

Finally, the Laws never use in this passage ἀδικεῖν, κακουργεῖν, or κακῶς ποιεῖν (the three, synonymous, expressions for actions that Socrates and Crito have agreed previously [49a–d] must never be done) to describe Socrates' proposed escape. And so there is no complete argument here against escape of the form: (1) One must never do wrong, not even in return for wrong done; (2) escaping from prison (by Socrates in this situation) is doing wrong, therefore (3) escape is forbidden. The crucial step is (2) – that is what needs to be determined. All that the Laws secure by this point is agreement to the idea that by escaping Socrates will be acting in a way *destructive* of the state (see 50b1 ἀπολέσαι, b3 ἀνατετράφθαι, b5 διαφθείρωνται). One is not doing wrong (acting unjustly), however, simply because one is acting destructively.

When Socrates asks Crito what they will say in response, he suggests, "[Yes, we are guilty of this destructive act against the Laws], for the city acted unjustly against us and did not judge our trial correctly," and Crito enthusiastically agrees (50c1–3).[56] This provides the second standing assumption for the argument that follows: Socrates was unjustly convicted and therefore wrongly imprisoned and wrongly sentenced to death. Neither the Laws nor Socrates nor, of course, Crito disputes this, just as no one disputed the idea that willful breaking of the laws is destructive of society. The argument which follows, then, is about whether, *given these two assumptions*, it is just for Socrates to do something that would, to some extent, contribute to the destruction of the city. I am trying to show that this is a live and legitimate question, and not simply an academic exercise.[57] Part of the point of these two assumptions is to head off simple, quick answers by one of the parties: either Crito claiming that escape does not do anything that is relevant to deliberation about whether it is just, or the Laws claiming that Socrates was justly convicted and so must be punished. The points so far have gone no distance, however, towards addressing the question of whether Socrates' proposed escape is wrong.[58]

[56] The part of the speech in brackets is an agreement with the Laws' point implied by Socrates' response beginning ἠδίκει γάρ. See Adam (1891), ad loc.

[57] Kraut (1984), 44–8 clearly recognizes that destroying the laws is not *ipso facto* an unjust action, since Socrates is not a pacifist. He correctly sees that the question at issue is whether such a destructive act *is* unjust.

[58] White (1996), 110 is thus not right in saying that the opening of the Laws' argument sees all disobedience to the laws as morally the same – as instances of doing wrong. I am arguing in direct opposition to such a view. Disobedience is – it is true – to some extent destructive of the laws; that is, it obviously undermines their authority. But whether it is therefore necessarily an act of *wrongdoing* is entirely undetermined thus far. The slide from "destructive" to "wrong" by White makes this count as a short, but complete, argument that escape is unjust; White then easily claims that it is inadequate.

In what follows the Laws mount a case for why it would indeed be wrong for Socrates in particular to act destructively towards Athens at this stage of his life. I shall show that the Laws leave it open that it may be just to disobey laws in other cities or even in Athens under different conditions. The idea that violation of law, and thus partial destruction of a city, is always wrong and unjust is not part of anyone's value system: not Socrates', Crito's, or even the Laws'. Socrates cannot be simply against the destruction of a city *tout court*; recall that "harm" and "injure" cannot mean physical harm for Socrates. The question, as always, is whether the causing of physical harm, the causing of destruction of people or cities, is just or not. The fact that something is being destroyed does not by itself answer this question.

The remaining argument of the Laws, then, should be understood as addressing the following problem: given that escaping from prison is destructive of the city, and given that Socrates has been treated unjustly by the city, is it right for Socrates to engage in this destructive act? Of course, if the Laws *had* disputed Socrates' innocence, they would have a quick proof, given SV, for remaining in prison: since Socrates is guilty, he must suffer the punishment.

2.7 THE ARGUMENTS OF THE LAWS

The arguments of the Laws have been extensively discussed. My goal here is to put them in a particular light by showing how they contribute to answering the determining question that genuinely needs answering: does Socrates commit an injustice by escaping from prison? Or does he, as Crito has argued, commit an injustice by remaining in prison – choosing the easy action instead of the action that a brave and good man would perform (45d6–8)? The reading I defend maintains that the Laws aim at addressing both of these questions, and that they answer as follows: first, Socrates does in fact commit an injustice by escaping from prison, and second, Crito is not right to think that Socrates *does* an injustice by remaining in prison, rather he only *suffers* one. The Laws do not ever argue that Socrates must commit an injustice if they order him to; they only argue that he must suffer an injustice. With respect to the first claim I argue against the prevalent authoritarian reading. I maintain that the injustice of Socrates' proposed escape could not have been determined without the detailed examination that the Laws undertake, and it involves quite particular aspects of Socrates' situation. The authoritarian-sounding principles have seemed so absolute in part because they have been pulled out of

context,[59] with the rest of the Laws' speech being dismissively called "rhetorical."[60] My focus on the *Crito* as a dialogue in which we witness Socrates make a concrete decision will enable us to see that the Laws are not engaged in establishing general principles. They are engaged in a concrete argument to show that certain principles correctly apply to Socrates in the present situation. If we do not recognize the particular nature of the argument in this context we risk relegating most of what the Laws say to rhetorical bluster. If the Laws really believe that the citizens of a state must simply obey whatever they command the citizen to do, then there is nothing further to argue about. But I suggest that the Laws' authoritarian remarks are embedded in a complicated set of debatable conditions that together make their overall conclusion persuasive.

While I follow the usual division of the argument into three parts, (1) the parent/city analogy (50c9–51c3), (2) the argument based on agreements (51c6–53a7), and (3) "Crito's concerns" (53a8–54b1), I shall show that the argument is *cumulative*. There are not a number of independent small arguments (for example, that Socrates' relationship to the city is like a child's to its parent, or the argument from agreement), each of which establishes *by itself* that Socrates' escape is unjust. Rather, the argument's overall conclusion that Socrates should not escape is not complete until the end. None of the three "parts" of the speech is intended by the Laws as complete on its own; it is the cumulative effect of all of them that establishes the conclusion. A result of this is that the burden for each part of the argument is lowered, and so the overall argument is a better one. If one understands each argument as complete by itself, then each ends up considerably worse, and, in fact, clearly inadequate. By contrast, the interpretation defended here allows everything that the Laws say to be relevant to the argument. I do not deny that the Laws' speech is conducted in an emotional and rhetorical style, and that this style is intended, in part, to persuade Crito.[61] But it is compatible with this that the entire content of the speech is necessary in order to provide a complete argument for the Laws'

[59] Bostock (1990), Miller (1996), Weiss (1998), Harte (1999) all argue that the Laws' speech is authoritarian; the latter three take this as a reason for rejecting it as representing Socrates' position. Kraut (1984) and DeFilippo (1991) argue against this. Kahn (1989), 40–1 thinks that in the authoritarian conclusion of parent/city analogy (51b–c) "Plato has here allowed the Laws to be carried too far along by the force of their own rhetoric, and that there is from the philosophical point of view no hope of salvaging this passage."

[60] Many commentators have remarked on this: see Vlastos (1974/1995), following a long tradition stemming back to Grote (1875). Kraut (1984) does not discuss the final section of the Laws' speech (53a–54b) in any detail.

[61] And, as I said above, the choice of the Laws as speaker might help to lessen the emotional impact of their conclusions for Crito.

conclusion, and so necessary for the determination of whether Socrates does an injustice by escaping or by remaining. On other readings, much of what is said by the Laws consists of beside-the-point details that are either aimed *only* at Crito's mistaken values, or else are entirely irrelevant.[62] In particular the presence of considerations such as age, friends, money, and children in the Laws' speech has led recent commentators to dismiss it as not genuinely expressing Socrates' own value system, but consisting rather of an ad hominem argument for the benefit of Crito. But if I have been correct so far, the Laws need to address Crito's own significant argument that remaining in prison does do an injustice to Socrates' friends, family, and himself.

2.7.1 The parent/city analogy

The analogy between parent and city, child and citizen, and the resulting claims that the citizen is the "slave and offspring" of the Laws, and that his birth, nurture, and education are all due to them, have seemed to commentators exaggerated. First let us look carefully at the transition to this part of the speech. Socrates and Crito, as I explained above, have just responded that they have been wronged by the Laws in a way that (at least potentially) justifies their acting in a manner destructive to the city. The Laws' first reaction is to ask whether *that* was the agreement they came to or whether it was an agreement to abide by the judgements of the city (50c4–6). Socrates supposes that they might be stupefied or amazed (θαυμάζοιμεν) by such a reply, and the Laws tell Socrates not to be, but to follow their argument. The parent/city argument then begins. Why would Socrates suppose that he and Crito might be stupefied by the first response? How is it a response to what they had said? When the Laws refer to abiding by agreements, it is a clear echo back to Socrates' earlier principle that one must abide by agreements *when the things one agrees to do are just* (49e6–50a2). The Laws' appeal to an agreement, in advance of a determination about whether remaining in prison is just, carries no weight, even by Socrates' own principle. According to Crito's argument, an extremely condensed version

[62] Bostock (1990), e.g. 8, 11, complains that the details of the argument are too difficult to allow precise formulation. He is frustrated that the Laws do not make clear when Socrates is supposed to have made his agreement. There are so many "messy details" because the argument, I have claimed, is a cumulative, not a decisive, one and because it is engaged in establishing a very particular claim: that Socrates should not, then and there, escape from prison. Kahn (1989), 35–6 points out the particular nature of the argument as applying to someone in Socrates' condition, i.e., of Socrates' age and "sedentary disposition." Vlastos (1974/1995), 42 also recognizes the particularity of the Laws' argument.

of which has just been mentioned, the injustice of Socrates' condemnation and impending execution, together with the effects of these events on friends, family, and not least of all on Socrates himself, justifies, and in fact *requires*, that Socrates do an act admittedly destructive of the Laws. Now the Laws are confident, of course, that what Socrates proposes to do is unjust. But their appeal to the force of an agreement is premature, and this response to Socrates' being stupefied reveals that they know it. They turn, then, in their rather condescending tone, to explain throughout the rest of the entire argument why they are right to think that the agreement is in fact about things that are just to do, and unjust not to do.

Understanding the parent/city analogy, and making its argument plausible, depend upon recalling the dual aspect of the Laws I noted above: the Laws are not only the laws of Athens *but also* laws in general. When the Laws begin with an appeal to the necessity of there being laws that have force and that are not overturned by private citizens, they appeal to a purportedly necessary condition for human beings to live together in a civilized way. At this level, the importance of laws, then, does not have anything specifically to do with the Athenian laws. Perhaps the most puzzling claim comes when the Laws maintain that they "brought Socrates to birth, and have been the agents of his father 'getting' (marrying) his mother, and of her birthing him" (50d1–3). As Josh Ober wonders, is this actually true?[63] With respect to the further claims that the Laws nurtured and educated Socrates, Richard Kraut attempts to find an actual Athenian law that requires the physical and musical education of children.[64]

Such maneuvers are unnecessary, however, and the Laws' point becomes plausible once we realize that they are thinking of themselves not only as the specific laws of Athens, but also as the laws of any civilized society. In a time when infant mortality rates were extremely high, the fact that Socrates was born and survived at all could reasonably be attributed in large part to the fact that he was born in a technologically advanced society: with shelter, clean water, adequate food, midwives, and so on. The chances of Socrates' literal survival, were he born outside of any society, not under the secure umbrella of some set of laws, are greatly diminished. This is not to say, at this point of the argument anyway, that other societies, such as

[63] See Ober (1998), 189: "And what of the oft-repeated litany of 'we bore, nurtured, and educated you'? If these are true claims, the Laws' contractual argument holds, and their rhetoric, however faulty, is irrelevant. But are they actually true? Did Socrates owe his birth to the laws of Athens? Was he well raised and properly nurtured by them? How did they educate him? All of this goes oddly unexamined in the dialogue."

[64] Kraut (1984), 91, n. 1. Ober (1998), 189, n. 63 and 232–40 is skeptical about the existence of any such law.

Thebes or Megara (which are mentioned later) might not have served this role equally well. The Laws start their argument by considering whether Socrates (and Crito) have a complaint against laws in general, so they begin by explaining (again, as an orator might) the importance of having law and order in the first place. Surely, they suppose, Socrates is not against laws in general, for the first benefit of the existence of laws is increased chance of actual survival. Many of us are probably accustomed to thinking of the whole world as, basically, civilized, so that if we were not born in a hospital in Toledo, we would be born in one in Turin or Sydney. Thus we do not readily think that we owe our birth to any laws. But simply consider one's chances of survival were one's mother attempting to give birth in a place that has no established, enforced laws, where bands of people fight one another without any overarching authority. This point carries forward to the other examples: the very meeting of Socrates' father and mother might be thought to be due to the presence of society – especially the fact that he knows who his father is. His nurture – that is, the food, clothing, and shelter he required to live – is also more easily and plausibly supplied in a civilized society, like Athens, but not only Athens. Rather than being far-fetched it seems to me correct that Socrates (and we, in fact) owe our nurture to the presence of society. Education clearly follows suit. Where and how, outside of a civilized, law-governed society, could one become educated in "music" and "physical training" (now we are approaching something that Athens could provide particularly well, but again not exclusively)? In the "wild," there would be no leisure for education, and no one to supply it. Indeed the arts of music and physical education would not have even developed in the first place outside of civilized society.

But these bare facts, significant as they are, do not form the entire basis of the Laws' argument. In addition, for each of the three categories – birth, nurture, and education – they *also* ask whether they ordered affairs finely (καλῶς), beyond setting up merely necessary conditions for them (50d4, d7; Socrates agrees at 50e1). The implication is that Socrates could, in theory, object at any stage if the Laws did not provide *finely* the goods that a society is supposed to provide. If they had been significantly wanting in any of these duties, then that might be part of a justification for Socrates' complaint and his claim that he is right to act destructively against them. Thus we see that the Laws base the notoriously strong conclusions that follow not only on what we now see as the reasonable belief that they have provided important necessities for Socrates' life and well-being, but also on the claim that they have provided them *well*. And indeed for Socrates and his fellow citizens in fifth-century Athens this would hardly be an implausible statement.

Understood in this way the argument of the Laws here should seem less hyperbolic. The Laws draw two conclusions from it. First, Socrates and his forebears are the offspring and slaves of the Laws (50e2–4). While this is still unquestionably a strong claim, we have seen how it can be plausibly defended. Moreover, in a badly ordered state, which did not "finely" provide safety, security, or education for the young Socrates, we can presume that Socrates would not rightly be considered that state's offspring or slave. What, then, does this status entail, according to the Laws? The Laws claim that this first conclusion leads to a second: Socrates and the Laws are not on equal footing with respect to what is just. Socrates cannot assume that what is right for the Laws to do to Socrates (namely, to attempt to destroy him in the belief, accepted as false by all, that Socrates has committed crimes worthy of death) it is equally right for Socrates to do to the Laws (attempt to destroy them, to the extent an individual can). This is justified by the example of the relationships of parent to child, and, especially odious, of master to slave. These parties are in an asymmetrical relation with respect to what is right: what is right for a parent to do to a child, or a master to a slave, is not right for a child to do to a parent, or a slave to a master.

I have three points, which are not, as far as I know, made in recent scholarship. First, this asymmetry in the relationship between parent and child is not presented as an absolute, universal rule.[65] It is intended to be analogous to the relationship between city and citizen. Given the argument that has preceded, we should understand a child's debt to his parents to be due to their giving her birth, nurture, and education "finely."[66] In keeping with that argument, if the parents have either not done these things or not done them "finely," the child would have a legitimate complaint against them, and might well not be in such an asymmetrical relationship. The legitimacy of the unequal footing conclusion depends, both in the case of the parents and in that of the city, not simply on their providing such goods, but on those goods being provided *well*. There is no reason to think that this important addition applies only when the goods are provided by the city and not by the parents. So, just as the Laws left open the possibility that a citizen might have a legitimate complaint against a state for not doing a good job at providing the conditions necessary for life, nurture, and education, and therefore might be right to act destructively towards the state, the parent/child relationship is no more absolute, if the parents

[65] Neither, then, is the asymmetry in master and slave. As Kraut (1984), 107 points out, the master/slave analogy is quickly dropped.

[66] This is taken as obvious, whereas the laws' contribution to a person's birth, nurture, and education needed to be pointed out, but, as I have argued, only briefly, and Socrates and Crito display no inclination to disagree with it.

have failed to do a good job at providing such benefits as well. Therefore the asymmetry of the relationship between parent and child and state and citizen is never simply absolute.

Secondly, *what* a legitimate asymmetry justifies is not that the citizen/child *do* anything that the city/parent commands, but specifically that he *suffer* certain things. The Laws argue that acting symmetrically against a state or parent who has performed its/his parental/state duties well is wrong. The list of examples the Laws offer are summed up as things "you should suffer" (πάσχοις, 50e9), and are all passive: in the case of what a parent might do – being verbally abused, being struck; and again a list of required suffering (πάσχειν, 51b4) at the hands of the city: "being struck," "being bound," or "being led into war to be wounded or killed."[67] The Laws say that Socrates must "do" (ποιητέον, 51b6) all of these things if the Laws command it. But it is striking that the Laws never, in any of the examples, command the citizen to *actively do* anything. In the one near exception, commanding him to go to war, Socrates quickly adds "to be wounded or killed" and not the active "to kill or wound." This is not an insignificant addition. In the fifth century there were well-known examples of morally conflicted military action, perhaps most famously the Mytilenean and Melian dialogues presented by Thucydides.[68] These were extremely well-known cases of moral conflict in the fifth century, and it is implausible that a reader of the *Crito* would not think of them. Given this background, Socrates' Laws are stunningly silent about what to do if the state commands you to kill people unjustly, and a contemporary reader (or listener) would notice this absence. The Melian expedition would, of course, violate Socrates' earlier principle: that one must keep an agreement, provided that the things you have agreed to are just. The Laws say nothing against this here. When one is led into war one must not "give way or retreat or leave the formation" (51b7–9); that is, one must *suffer* anything rather than retreat, give way, or leave the formation.[69]

[67] See DeFilippo (1991), 257–9. Recall 48d5, πάσχειν, quoted above, where Socrates, *in propria persona*, first introduces the idea that he should suffer ill rather than do an injustice.

[68] See Ober (1998), 94–104. Vlastos (1995) brings this example up as something that the Laws could command Socrates to do, but that is immoral.

[69] The passive examples are meant to be thinly veiled analogies to Socrates' suffering the unjust penalties of prison and execution. Anticipating the upcoming argument, however, we can see that it will be necessary for Socrates to address what I call "Crito's concerns" in the final third of the Laws' speech. For Crito has argued that Socrates' remaining in prison is *more than* a mere suffering of injustice, namely an example of *doing* injustice towards his friends, family, and self. If Socrates can establish that he is not doing wrong, but only suffering it, by remaining, then he can rely on the argument that a citizen must, under certain conditions, suffer what the state commands. I thank Tom Berry for his comments about this.

Note finally that the Laws' conclusion is to ask how Socrates can claim to be acting justly by destroying them (again, as far as he is able) (51a6), given that they are trying to destroy him while "*believing that it is just*" (δίκαιον ἡγούμενοι εἶναι, 51a4). A couple of important points here: first, as Socrates presents them, the Laws act according to SV; they are not simply setting out to destroy him for profit, or for pleasure, but because they think it just. So, although it is a common assumption by all involved that Socrates' conviction and impending execution are in fact unjust, the Laws point out that they were acting in the belief that it was just. Second, this shows that it is part of no party's "value system" that destruction is in itself wrong. Although the Laws may be wrong in this case to try to destroy Socrates, executing a guilty criminal is not simply wrong because it involves destroying. By parity of reasoning, Socrates' attempt to destroy the Laws insofar as he can is also (as I have been arguing throughout) not *ipso facto* unjust, although it may turn out that Socrates' attempt to destroy these Laws in particular at this particular point in time *will* be unjust.

My goal is not to make the Laws' argument here unassailable. In fact, it is one of my claims that the entire argument of the Laws is at best "what Socrates seems to hear."[70] While the Laws' reasons for the injustice of escape and the justice of remaining and suffering execution will drown out all others by the end of the dialogue, I do not think that Plato intends the reader to understand this as a perfect argument. Socrates' disavowal of knowledge of what justice is is in keeping with his claim that the argument is the one that seems best to him at that time. It is expected that someone could argue against the position of the Laws, as commentators on the *Crito* of course reasonably do. We might still argue, for example, that the parent/city analogy is too conservative. What I have tried to do so far is to indicate that it is more plausible than it has seemed to many because it appeals to the critical role of a state in general to the survival and welfare of human beings, because it bases its claims on the condition that certain services have been *finely* provided, and because it demands only that the party in the subordinate position *suffer* bad things, but not *do* them.

2.7.2 *The argument from agreement (51c6–53a7)*

Despite the benefits that the Laws have given Socrates (51d1, see καλῶν), he is still not obliged *by virtue of them alone* not to escape from prison.

[70] The frequent mention of the argument's status as what "seems" to be the case need not imply that Socrates is particularly doubtful about its correctness. So "seems" in the *Crito* does not mean "seems, as opposed to is" – as in, for example, the sun "seems" to sink below the horizon. Rather "seems" means "is most probably true." Nevertheless it still expresses epistemological hesitancy.

The Laws now argue additionally that Socrates has in fact entered into a just agreement with them to abide by their decisions. There is, however, an ambiguity in the phrase "a just agreement," which yields two different principles: (a) that one ought to abide by an agreement to do just things; and (b) that one ought to abide by an agreement entered into under just conditions. While the principle that Socrates and Crito agreed to earlier (49e6–7) appeared to emphasize (a), the Laws seem to argue primarily for (b).[71] I don't think we need to make much of this for a couple of reasons. First, (b) *is* obviously relevant to a question of whether a person is justly obligated to abide by an agreement. If you get me to promise to mow your lawn by tricking me or by threatening me, I am not obliged by that promise even though, let us presume, mowing your lawn is not an unjust thing to do. So defending the claim that Socrates has entered into an agreement fairly is certainly relevant as part of the Laws' argument that Socrates is required to remain in prison. Moreover, if one reads the argument from agreement, as I do not, as one which *by itself* establishes the claim that Socrates must remain, then it must (at least) also establish (a). But on my interpretation, even if the argument from agreement establishes (a) *and* (b), the Laws are still not finished with their argument against escape until they also explain, in the final section, that Socrates' failure to escape would not itself be doing an injustice (as Crito claims). This is part of the "cumulative" interpretation. In addition, we have already seen that the parent/city part of the argument went some distance towards establishing (a); it implied certain limits to the claims of the Laws' authority and command, with its emphasis on what a citizen must suffer or endure at the hands of the state.

I maintain then that the Laws say nothing explicit on the question in political philosophy of what a citizen's obligation is when the state commands him to do an unjust action: the Laws are in the midst of arguing only that Socrates (and any citizen in a like position) is obligated to *suffer* an unjust penalty. Nevertheless, we already have a hint that the Laws also agree to SV when they make explicit that their attempt to destroy Socrates is made "believing it to be just" (51a4). Furthermore, we will see below that they boldly and explicitly endorse SV in the concluding lines of their speech (54b2–8). Given these passages, and the fact that up until then they had been at best silent on the question of what a person's obligation might

[71] Bostock (1990), 9–10 and Harte (1999), 126–8 complain that the "argument from agreement" establishes only the second, and not the first, and that the Laws make no attempt to show that what they command, in this particular case, is not wrong. I shall show that they point out both that Socrates is being commanded to suffer wrong, not to do it, and that in the final section of the argument, 53a8 ff., "Crito's Concerns," the Laws positively establish that allowing himself to be killed is in fact not doing himself, or his friends, or his family, wrong, as we have seen Crito claims.

be if he were commanded by the state to do an injustice, it becomes clear that the Laws *do*, after all, agree with (a) and with Socrates' commitment here and in the *Apology* never to do what is unjust.

Turning to (b), then, the Laws explain that a citizen is free to leave at any time with all of his possessions, if the Laws are not pleasing to him after he has seen how they conduct the state, despite the fact that he has accrued the benefits of birth, nurture, and education. When they make explicit that "none of the laws is either an obstacle to this or forbids it" (51d5–6), they clearly imagine a possibility where there *was* a law in some possible state forbidding a person from leaving or requiring him to forfeit his property. If there were such a law, then, it stands to reason that their case for claiming that Socrates has entered into a fair agreement would be weakened. This is part of an argument for the overall fairness of the situation in which Socrates has been put. In addition, the option to persuade, which in this section of the text is repeated several times, is another reason why attempting to destroy the Laws would be unjust. Presumably, once again, if the laws of some state offered no opportunity for persuasion (whatever exactly that amounts to)[72] then perhaps Socrates' obligation to suffer what they command him to would be mitigated, and he might be right in behaving destructively towards them.[73]

The Laws next spend considerable time explaining why Socrates in particular is among those most susceptible to the charge of breaking a just agreement about just things; they will give "great proofs" (μεγάλα τεκμήρια, 52b1) of this.[74] The content of this argument is familiar: not only has Socrates never lived anywhere else despite the fact that he has said that Sparta and Crete are well governed (52e5–6), he has almost never left

[72] See Kraut (1984), ch. 3; and discussions in Irwin (1986a); Bostock (1990), 13–17.

[73] White's (1996) overall analysis of the Laws goes seriously awry in my view when he claims (115) that the argument from agreement commits a citizen to obey all the laws of the city: "The theory of the Nomoi would oblige anyone who stayed in the city to obey an imaginable law, say one prohibiting public speech or requiring one to carry out genocidal murders." Part of the case that Socrates is bound by the agreement is connected throughout with the fact that he must persuade or obey. We do not have to follow Kraut (1984) in thinking that persuade may only mean "try to persuade" to see that the agreement is between Socrates and a state that allows some sort of free speech with respect to questions of justice and injustice, right and wrong. As for genocide, we have seen that the Laws say nothing inconsistent with SV insofar as they emphasize what Socrates must *suffer*, and exclusively use passive examples. We shall see below that they in fact declare their allegiance to SV later. See also DeFilippo (1991).

[74] One might well think of the μεγάλα τεκμήρια Socrates offers *in propria persona* in the *Apology* (32a4 ff.) for his claim that anyone who is committed to acting justly must live a private, not a public, life. We can see from these passages that μεγάλα τεκμήρια in both cases involve a listing of particular events in a person's life. Here is one of many parallels between the way the Laws argue in the *Crito* and the way Socrates argues in the *Apology*.

the city, except once for a festival and for military service (52b). In fact even "the lame, the blind, and the crippled" have traveled out of the city more than Socrates has (53a2–3)! Further, Socrates has had children in Athens, thereby showing that the city was congenial to him (52c1–3). I call attention to the cumulative nature of the argument. It is the mounting evidence of these small details taken together that constitutes an overwhelming case. But the presence of such details, and their relevance to the case at hand, reveal something significant about the nature of the argument. Suppose that Socrates had frequently left the city, spending years abroad, had only a loose connection with Athens, and had raised a family in a different city. If any of these things had been true, then Socrates' obligation to suffer what the Laws have imposed would have been mitigated to some degree. Would Socrates' having had a family in Sparta mean that he could escape from prison justly? By itself, probably not. The particular facts would have to be looked at and considered, just as the actual details are. I contend, however, that it is the accumulation of these details that constitutes the Laws' argument. The Laws clearly do not take the alleged injustice of Socrates' proposed escape to be deduced easily from a violation of some rule.

Finally the Laws also importantly refer back to the *Apology*:

> Moreover, it was possible for you during the trial itself to assess the penalty at exile if you wished, and to do *then*, with the city willing, what you are *now* attempting to do, with it unwilling. But *then* you prided yourself that if it were for you to die it would not be distressing, but you preferred, as you said, death over exile. While *now* you are not ashamed before those arguments [λόγους], nor do you have regard for us, the Laws, since you attempt to destroy us and you do the things that the basest slave would do: try to run away from the compacts and agreements according to which you agreed to be governed by us. (52c3–d3)

These considerations are striking, particularly for those who would claim that the Laws do not represent Socrates' own position and values.[75] It seems clear that the Laws are rebuking Socrates for inconsistency in his views. Calling him to be ashamed before his arguments echoes the earlier part of the *Crito* where Socrates says he respects and values the same *logoi* as before (46c1). Now the Laws proceed to challenge him: if this is true, how can you go back on your earlier arguments without regard for them? We should not make the burden of this consideration too heavy; it is not meant to show Socrates why his escape, by itself, would be an unjust breaking of his agreements. It simply points, cumulatively, to yet another feature of

[75] Weiss (1998), 119–20 argues that the Laws are angry with Socrates' "priding" himself on not fearing death. This seems to me to strain the more straightforward reading.

Socrates' proposed action. The Laws do not reprimand Socrates for his prideful attitude towards death, but for the fact that he is about to be inconsistent, and it is a well-known precept for Socrates that one must be consistent in one's actions, as he himself has emphasized earlier in the *Crito*.

2.7.3 "Crito's concerns"

The final section of the Laws' argument is where scholars have found material that is deemed the most un-Socratic and irrelevant to establishing the injustice of Socrates' proposed escape. Considerations are raised about friends, family, and Socrates' own survival, clearly responding to the concerns raised by Crito earlier in the dialogue. The theme that connects these considerations is the question of what good will be achieved by Socrates' escape, when escaping involves (as the Laws have already established) transgressing agreements and harming an institution that Socrates in particular should not harm. The Laws wonder whether perhaps some good will result from what seems, so far, to be an unjust action. I believe that this is not an idle question, nor is it a superfluous part of the argument. There is a real possibility that, although escaping from prison, other things being equal, would be the wrong thing for Socrates to do, in the present circumstances there is such a great good that would be achieved that it in fact makes escaping, overall, the right thing to do. For Socrates considers the consequences of his action with a view to determining what is virtuous, not because he is trying to realize some other aim, such as saving his life.

Even more importantly, the Laws *must* address Crito's argument that Socrates will in fact be *doing* an injustice by not escaping. They concede up front that Socrates will suffer one, and this is not disallowed by SV. In addition, although they have made most of their case that he will *do* an injustice by escaping, they must still show that there will be no injustice done by *not* escaping.

The first possibility considered is the good escape will provide for Socrates' friends. This turns out to be fruitless: Socrates' friends will themselves be exiled and deprived of a polis and/or have their property destroyed. Perhaps, then, Socrates will gain something by escaping. First, where will he escape to? If Socrates goes to a "well-governed" city (53b5), such as Thebes or Megara, he will arrive as a hostile party (πολέμιος). Anyone who disregards the laws of his city when they have fulfilled the duties that the Laws have (providing well for one's birth, nurture, education, allowing one free speech, and the right to leave with one's property, and so on) is an enemy to laws in general, and so to civilized people, who, it has been

assumed throughout, must live under some laws which have force. Further, if Socrates escapes he will confirm the idea that the jury was right to convict him, for one who will corrupt and destroy the Laws would also certainly corrupt the young and the naïve.

Another possibility is to avoid well-governed cities and "civilized people" (κοσμιώτατοι). The argument here is interesting. The question the Laws ask is: will life then be worth living (53c4–5)? The Laws continue by asking Socrates what sort of *logoi* he will have, and about what topics. Will he still be able to argue justice and virtue are the most important things for human beings? It is hard to imagine that this is not meant to recall *Apology* 37c ff. where Socrates considers exile as a penalty and concludes that the unexamined life is not worth living for human beings. There Socrates imagined someone asking him whether he couldn't just go somewhere else and be quiet, and not engage in conversations (37e3–4). Here he has the Laws asking him the very same questions. The idea that Socrates is now arguing on the basis of some different values, or in a way entirely ad hominem, seems implausible. If Socrates could go to some well-governed place and continue to discuss virtue every day, then perhaps some good would indeed come from his escape. But this, the Laws argue, is not the case. The appeal is not to some value system foreign to Socrates, but to the heart of Socratic doctrine. Running away, without the possibility of conducting *logoi* about virtue, would be an inconsistent act for Socrates.

Thessaly, finally, is an intemperate and licentious place, where Socrates will be looked at as exceedingly greedy for life, given that he is likely to live only a short time more (53d8). Again the theme of Socrates' age is brought up, just as it was at this point in the *Apology* (37c5–6 and 37d4). Given, as we have seen, the prominent mention of Socrates' age there, we cannot simply suppose that this is a consideration that he trots out merely because of the appeal it might have to Crito. The Laws also return again to the question of what *logoi* Socrates will have with the type of people in Thessaly, and without such *logoi* what will be the purpose of living. Simply to feast (53e)? Socrates' escape then does no good for his friends, and, according to Socrates' own values straight from the *Apology* – that one must discuss virtue every day (38a3) – exile will provide no good for Socrates. The remaining possibility is that he will do his children some good. But this is also untrue, for he would not want his children raised and nurtured in a place like Thessaly, and his children will be cared for in his absence. If they are cared for in his absence by his friends, there will be no difference whether he is in Thessaly or in the underworld.

2.7.4 The Laws' conclusion

The Laws' conclusion is carefully expressed: "Come then, be persuaded by us who have nurtured you not to make more of (περὶ πλείονος ποιοῦ) your children or your life or anything else instead of the just (πρὸ τοῦ δικαίου)" (53b2–4). Here we see an unequivocal statement of SV, employing what I have argued is the key idea of what one "attaches more value to." It is not that one's life or one's children are irrelevant to deliberation about what constitutes the just action, for they have just now been taken into consideration in the Laws' deliberation (a deliberation, I have argued, that is in line with and consistently appeals to Socratic values – most emphatically here with a statement of SV). Rather, one must be careful not to elevate concern for such things above concern for the just. In short: one must always adhere to SV. Now that the Laws have established, they believe, that it is in fact unjust to escape from prison, and not unjust to remain, the only thing that remains is to recall the commitment to SV. The risk is that, in times of duress, the aim becomes simply saving one's life or one's children. As Socrates had established with Crito at 48b5–6, what is περὶ πλείστου is not living, but living well, where that means living finely and justly. So now the Laws warn again that Socrates must not mistakenly "make more of" his survival or his children's welfare. The Laws' cumulative case is complete. No single argument is decisive. Rather it is the succession and combination of detailed considerations taken together which answers the determining question by concluding that, overall, escape is the wrong thing for Socrates to do. Had these details been different – had Socrates been thirty-five, had there been a philosophical community to join, had Athens prevented him from discussing virtue every day, had they indeed commanded him actively to do something unjust rather than to suffer it – the conclusion of the argument might have been different as well. I think Plato leaves it open that we could even resuscitate some of Crito's own arguments. But Socrates makes clear at the end that all of these considerations together are, for him at least, decisive.

CHAPTER 3

The supremacy of virtue in the Gorgias

3.1 THE *GORGIAS* AND SV

Unlike the *Apology* and *Crito*, the *Gorgias* is not concerned with determining what a person or people should do in a particular situation. In the *Apology*, Socrates not only cites various specific actions of his own and explains how they were always done in accordance with SV, but he is also engaged in attempting to persuade the jury to perform a particular action. The jury must make concrete decisions then and there about what is to be done with Socrates and he calls on them to hold to the standard of SV as well. In the *Crito*, as we have seen, Socrates attempts to persuade Crito that to escape is to do an injustice, while to remain in prison is not. There again a concrete decision about what the virtuous action is must be made in the *hic et nunc* of the dialogue. No such context is present in the *Gorgias*. Nor, at least at the beginning, does the heavy atmosphere of Socrates' impending execution weigh over the dialogue.[1]

Although there are these differences between the *Apology* and *Crito* on the one hand, and the *Gorgias* on the other, there are even more important similarities. Although usually considered "early" or "Socratic" dialogues,

[1] The dialogue begins with a joke by the most infamous interlocutor, Callicles, who teases Socrates: "*Callicles*: This is the way they say one ought to join a war or a battle, Socrates. *Socrates*: You mean 'We've arrived after the feast,' as they say, and we're too late?" (447a1–4). With hindsight, one might read more into this apparently playful interchange and understand it as a first stab by Callicles at Socrates' "manliness." Later Callicles will question the courage and manliness of those who occupy themselves into adulthood with philosophy (484c ff.). In addition, if Dodds (1959), 188, is right to say that the expression that Socrates and Callicles are referring to is something like "first at feast, last at fray," Socrates' response is significant for setting the stage for what is to follow. While Callicles analogizes the epideictic displays of Gorgias, which Socrates has missed, to "the fray," Socrates turns the expression around and refers, with feigned innocence, to what preceded as the "feast." As he makes clear over the next Stephanus page, this is just fine with him: he can see the display some other time, but now he would like to have a "discussion." Thus, having missed what he considers to be the feast, Socrates implies that the "fray" is the discussion that is about to ensue. See *Ion* 531a, for a similar reluctance to hear an *epideixis*. As we shall see, later in the discussion with Callicles there is much foreshadowing of Socrates' eventual trial and execution.

all three lack some typical criteria for inclusion in that group: none ends in aporia and none attempts to determine in general terms what virtue or a virtue is. In contrast with the *Apology* and *Crito*, the *Gorgias* does address a "What is F?" question, but the F is not a virtue, but rhetoric. Despite the fact that the "official" topic of the dialogue is "What is rhetoric?" scholars have focused more on arguments that on the face of it have little to do with the nature of rhetoric: whether people can do what they see fit without doing what they want; whether suffering injustice is better than doing it; whether pleasure is the good; and whether there is a distinction between what is just by convention and what is just by nature. Moreover, Socrates appears to take definite positions on all of these issues, and to argue one side of the case against his interlocutor, in contrast with more aporetic dialogues.[2]

For my purposes in this chapter, however, the most important feature of the *Gorgias* is that, like the *Apology* and *Crito*, it is centrally focused on SV. The three "episodes," each of which takes place mostly between Socrates and a new interlocutor (Gorgias, Polus, and finally Callicles), draw on the same reasoning we saw presented briefly in the *Apology* and *Crito*. In a more expanded form that resembles what we shall find in the *Gorgias*, the reasoning proceeds as follows: human beings are combinations of body and soul, the soul is a distinct locus of harm and benefit from the body, and so both the body and the soul each has its own "good condition" or "health." Further, the value of the good condition of the soul is incomparably superior to the value of the health of the body.[3] Once these beliefs are established (at times no trivial accomplishment), one can ask what it is that causes this healthy condition of the soul – that is, what benefits the soul qua soul – and the answer for Socrates is of course virtuous actions. The "myth" at the end of the *Gorgias* develops with vivid imagery the idea of the soul as an independent locus of harm and benefit that has, to different degrees, been harmed or benefited by the actions in which it has engaged. As I have argued in the first two chapters, an interlocutor can concede this much without anything following either about the nature of the virtuous action in the here and now, or about the nature of virtuous action in general. Much of Socrates' long speech near the end of the dialogue, after Callicles has ceased to be an active interlocutor, will highlight the importance of the distinction between aiming and determining questions.

[2] See Irwin (1979), Introduction.

[3] The text, as far as I can tell, is indeterminate about whether the superior importance of the soul is a superiority in quantity or quality (or perhaps both). I shall not try to resolve this. Either way it is clear that the importance of the well-being of the soul is taken to be *incomparably* greater/superior. Nussbaum (1986) attempts to argue that Plato wants to make all value commensurable. A central text for her is the hedonism argument from the *Protagoras* (351b ff.). See 4.4.

In the *Apology* and *Crito* Socrates does not argue for SV in detail nor does he encounter any objections to it. In the *Gorgias* matters are more complex. I shall read the *Gorgias* as displaying three interlocutors whose primary differences revolve around their relationship to SV. In a nutshell, Gorgias has ignored or failed to pay attention to SV (3.3). Seduced by the power, fame, and wealth afforded him by his "craft," he has never critically thought about the relationship between rhetoric (and the uses to which he puts it) and virtue. Once, however, Socrates raises questions about this, we shall see that Gorgias concedes the truth of SV, and not simply, as Polus will claim, because he is ashamed not to. Polus is a different sort. He acknowledges ordinary examples of just and unjust actions, but he denies that virtue is supreme. I shall show that this is because he lacks the concept of the soul as an independent locus of harm and benefit (which Gorgias does not) (3.4). The idea that something that does not harm his body or deprive him of material possessions can nevertheless harm him (let alone, as Socrates claims, harm the most important part of him) is not something Polus – especially at the beginning of his encounter with Socrates – understands. Callicles is different yet again (3.5–7). While he begins by advocating what sounds like a radical, non-conventional, conception of excellence, we shall see that he employs a very ordinary conception of harm and benefit. His eventual conception of the good – appetite gratification – is something he conceives of as a good *for* the soul. It has the distinct advantage of settling determining questions relatively simply: the virtuous action is the action that most gratifies one's appetite. Once Socrates shows a conflict between Callicles' elite sense of superiority and his idea that the good is exhausted by appetite gratification, the problem of what constitutes virtue reemerges.

3.2 SOCRATES AND RHETORIC IN THE *GORGIAS*

The dialogue opens with a Socrates apparently familiar from the dialogues of definition: he raises a "What is F?" question, inquires about whether Gorgias would be willing to engage in a discussion, rather than put on a rhetorical display (447b9–c4), and insists, sometimes quite zealously, on short responses to his questions that avoid any rhetorical flourishes (448d–e, 449b–d). Once Polus' attempt to take over the role of answerer is rebuffed, Gorgias, anxious to please, assumes the role and boasts that no one can answer as briefly as he can (449c3). Also familiar from such dialogues as *Protagoras*, *Hippias Minor*, *Hippias Major*, *Euthydemus*, and *Ion* is Socrates' mistrust of and thinly-veiled dislike for sophists, orators, and

speech-makers – particularly those with a large reputation.[4] He goes after Gorgias aggressively, pausing occasionally for asides about whether Gorgias minds being refuted, which he himself thinks is a great good (457c ff.). Despite such disclaimers, however, readers can easily get the impression that Socrates is simply gunning for a refutation.[5] After Gorgias has been refuted, suspicions about Socrates' hostility towards Gorgias and rhetoric appear to be confirmed. When Socrates explains his own positive views about rhetoric, we discover that he denies that it is a skill (τέχνη) at all, but claims instead that it is a mere "knack" (ἐμπειρία) (462b–466a; cf. 500a5–501c5). What is worse, it is a knack that falls under the heading of "flattery," as κολακεία is usually translated, or, less delicately, "grubbing." The crudeness and hostility of this description of Gorgias' purportedly most noble and powerful skill is confirmed by Socrates' hesitation to speak his mind.[6] Rhetoric has two defects, corresponding to the above descriptions: first, insofar as it is flattering it aims only at the pleasant without regard for the good,[7] and, second, insofar as it is a "knack" it merely guesses at how to achieve this, without the principled understanding of a skill. Without looking at the argument more closely here,[8] it is plain that Socrates, at this stage of the dialogue, does not think much of rhetoric. His attack on Gorgias and rhetoric is motivated not only by what Gorgias says, but by certain of his own beliefs about the nature of the activity. Still, none of this is particularly surprising coming from the Socrates we see in the *Apology*, *Crito*, and the dialogues of definition: the advocate of virtue above all, the relentless admirer of the *technai*, and the constant seeker of "definitions."

But there are other aspects of Socrates' behavior in the dialogue that are strikingly odd when viewed in light of the issues just discussed. For one, at the very opening of the dialogue Plato lets the reader know that Socrates has come there expressly to see Gorgias. Although they have missed Gorgias' rhetorical display, Chairephon reassures Socrates: he is Gorgias' friend and Gorgias will give them a display anyway (447b1–3). Callicles is shocked by this: "What, Chairephon?! Does Socrates desire to hear Gorgias?", to which Chairephon replies, "Indeed, it was for this very thing that we came"

[4] See *Ap.* 22a where Socrates says that in his investigations of his fellow citizens he found that those with the greatest reputation had the least knowledge, while those with less were better off.

[5] See, e.g., Beversluis (2000), ch. 14.

[6] See how Socrates does not hesitate to call rhetoric a knack, but pauses in embarrassment before calling what Gorgias does "grubbing" (462e6–463b1). Socrates here at least acts as though he might be ashamed to say what he really believes about Gorgias' alleged "skill."

[7] This foreshadows the significance of Callicles' later hedonism, and Socrates' arguments against it. If pleasure simply *is* the good, then the idea that rhetoric aims only at pleasure will not count against it.

[8] See 3.4.

(ἐπ' αὐτό γέ τοι τοῦτο πάρεσμεν, 447b6). When Socrates speaks next he confirms what Chairephon says, asking whether Gorgias would be willing to have a discussion, because he wants to know what the power of Gorgias' skill is, and what he professes to do and teach.

Such a beginning is without parallel in the Platonic dialogues; never does a dialogue begin because Socrates specifically seeks someone out to ask him a question.[9] Although commentators have not found this noteworthy, Callicles certainly does. Socrates wants to talk to Gorgias and his inquiry into Gorgias' area of expertise is clearly not as naïve as it sounds. He knows as well as anyone what Gorgias professes to do. Indeed, Socrates himself is the first person in the dialogue to use the word "rhetoric" (448d9), when he says that it is clear to him that Polus has studied "what is called rhetoric." Some ten lines later, when Socrates finally gets to ask Gorgias directly what skill he possesses, Gorgias responds, "Rhetoric," to the surprise of no one. So despite the hostility and suspicion that Socrates appears to bear towards rhetoric, Plato makes it clear to the reader from the beginning that Socrates wants to find out about it. There is something about persuasion, and the skill that purports to generate it, that Socrates himself seeks to discover.

Why is Socrates so anxious to talk to Gorgias about the "power of his craft," especially when he seems so hostile towards rhetoric, and indeed later denies that rhetoric is even a skill? Socrates is a notorious failure at persuasion. The most famous instance, of course, is his inability to persuade the Athenian jury, even though he explicitly sees his duty in that context as one of "teaching and persuading" (διδάσκειν καὶ πείθειν, *Apology* 35c2). Indeed, Socrates sums up his life's work there as attempting to persuade (πείθειν, 36c5) each citizen to care for nothing more than being the best and the wisest possible. In the *Crito*, Socrates thinks it important to persuade Crito (48e4), and both Crito's appeal to Socrates and the Laws' contain several entreaties to Socrates to "be persuaded" by them (45a2, 46a8, 53a6, 54b2, 54d1). Further, as we have discussed, the Laws require citizens "to persuade or obey [be persuaded]" (51e). In other dialogues, characters are discussed who have associated with Socrates, but have famously not been "persuaded" by him: Critias, Charmides, and Alcibiades are standout

[9] Typically Socrates is waylaid by people he happens to meet (*Euthyphro*, *Laches*, *Lysias*, *Republic*). In other cases he is taken somewhere by someone (*Protagoras*) or obligated to be at a party (*Symposium*). In the *Charmides* Socrates goes of his own volition to the gymnasium, having been away at the battle of Potidaea, in order to find out what is going on among the youth – whether any are excelling at beauty and/or philosophy. So here Socrates initiates contact with his interlocutors, but he is not looking for anyone in particular nor looking to ask a particular question. As Debra Nails pointed out to me, in the *Parmenides* (127c), a very young Socrates along with others goes purposefully to listen to Zeno; but even here Socrates is not looking to ask someone a specific question.

examples. In the context of the *Gorgias*, the theme of persuasion becomes quite urgent. From the perspective of the outer frame we might suspect that Plato depicts Socrates as seeking Gorgias out as a sign to his readers that, despite his hostility towards rhetoric as it is practiced by Gorgias and his followers, Socrates himself has a problem with persuasion; he needs some skill that will do what rhetoric purports to do. In the encounters with Polus and Callicles, as we shall see below, Socrates confronts characters that do not seem amenable to persuasion. Whereas Gorgias breaks into the "Polus episode" to understand Socrates' claim that rhetoric is an "image of part of politics" (463d), and then also intercedes twice during the conversation with Callicles (497b, 506b) to prevent him from abandoning the discussion, we hear no more from Polus after he is "refuted." Further, I know of no commentator who thinks that Socrates persuades Callicles at the end of the dialogue, and Plato provides many clues that Socrates' attempt at persuasion is unsuccessful. Indeed, it appears that Callicles' own willingness even to continue the discussion with Socrates is waning as early as 497b5, with thirty Stephanus pages of what continues in some form to be a conversation between him and Socrates still to go. It is Gorgias' intrusions that keep the discussion going and Callicles himself states twice (501c8, 505c5) that he is continuing only to gratify Gorgias.[10] In fact, for significant stretches (506c–509d, 511c–513c, 517b–519d, 523a–527d) Callicles says practically not a word – at most offering Socrates a sarcastic "keep going," and not even offering his typical grudging assent. In fact, it would be accurate to say that for most of 500a ff. Socrates gets carried away by his own rhetoric – even commenting on it himself at 519d–e.

The behavior of Socrates in the last thirty pages of the dialogue is especially striking when we compare it to the Socrates we see at the start. What is Socrates doing at the end of this dialogue? He is making speeches aimed at persuasion. In the most stunning example of this Socrates relates his *logos* to Callicles, who he claims will think of it as a "story" (μῦθος, 523a). One thing this *logos* does is to provide a vivid illustration of the importance of SV: one must always aim at virtue because virtuous actions cause the soul to be healthy and beautiful, and vicious actions do the opposite. In the underworld, when one will be "stripped naked" and appear with his body removed, the nature of his soul will be clear to the judges there. What is the point of such a *logos*? Surely to be persuasive. Where did the Socrates who insisted on short question and answer go? The closing lines of the dialogue, considered in this light, are remarkable:

[10] At 516b he says that he is answering simply to gratify Socrates.

Therefore be persuaded by me [ἐμοὶ οὖν πειθόμενος] and follow me here to where you will be happy both while you live and once you have died, as the account [λόγος] indicates . . . For it is disgraceful, being in the state we now appear to be in, where we act like youths as if we are somebody, we for whom the same things never appear to be the case about the same topics, and these topics about the most important things – we have come that far in our lack of education [ἀπαιδευσίας]. Therefore, let us use the account [τῷ λόγῳ] as a guide, the one which has now been made clear, which indicates to us that this way of life is best, the one that practices justice and the rest of virtue both in living and dying. Therefore let us follow *this* way, and let us call on others [to do so] as well, and not follow *that* one, which you who believe in it call on me [to follow] – for that one is worth nothing, Callicles. (527c4–6 . . . 527d5–e7)

This is as clear an example of an attempt at persuasive, protreptic speech as one may find, complete with an explicit call to be persuaded, and three closing hortatory subjunctives urging collective action. This is quite a rhetorical display by the man who began the dialogue hostile to all such displays and sharply critical of rhetoric and its practitioners. If we consider this from the perspective of the outer frame it seems clear that Plato asks the reader to look critically at Socrates' relationship to rhetoric. Socrates cannot simply ignore rhetoric: he needs it and wants to be persuasive, although it seems he is not successful. Why he fails is a topic of continuing interest for Plato, and one that will be centrally addressed in the *Republic*.[11] While Socrates is critical of rhetoric and orators, we see that in the end he needs it and, almost desperately in these final lines, seeks to persuade. The portrayal of Socrates saying these things to an entirely unpersuaded and perhaps unpersuadable Callicles,[12] with his eventual trial and execution on the horizon, makes for a dark and disturbing end to the dialogue.

[11] Which, like the *Apology*, begins with a mention of persuasion and who can be persuaded, why, and so on; see chapter five.

[12] While it is fairly clear that Callicles is unpersuad*ed* by Socrates' words, whether Plato wants to depict him as unpersuad*able* through argument is more difficult to determine. At 513c3–6, Callicles says that he is experiencing what he claims many do who speak to Socrates: he thinks Socrates is speaking well but he is nevertheless "not quite persuaded" by him. The problem is that "not quite persuaded" translates οὐ πάνυ σοι πείθομαι, which can mean either "not *quite* persuaded" or "not *at all* persuaded." The fact that Callicles refers to his experience as one that many have who listen to Socrates seems to me to suggest the former interpretation. Socrates is surely somewhat persuasive to many of those he speaks with. Irwin (1979), 233 comments: "Though Callicles is still not entirely convinced, Socrates does not suggest (contrary to Dodds) that he is unreachable by rational argument." See too Irwin (1986b). Irwin is perhaps right that Socrates does not suggest this, believing that repeated examination will eventually produce conviction, but, from the perspective of the outer frame, perhaps Plato does. After all, as we mentioned above, if Gorgias had not intervened, it seems clear that Callicles would have simply ceased to talk to Socrates at all any longer. See also Cooper (1999b), 73–5.

Socrates is stuck somewhere between the flattering knack of the rhetoric practiced by Gorgias and the true rhetoric he endorses. As we shall see in the discussion of Socrates' response to Callicles, true rhetoric would be an activity that had both the correct aim (virtue) and the understanding of the nature and causes of that aim. In the language of this book, the true rhetorician would combine commitment to the aiming principle SV with the substantive moral expertise that would resolve determining questions. While Socrates is committed to SV, he lacks the techne-knowledge that he hopes would make his rhetoric persuasive, as we shall see below.[13]

The "official" topic of the *Gorgias* is the power of rhetoric, and so, fundamentally, of persuasion. If we understand the dialogue as displaying the limitations and failures of Socratic persuasion, we may be able to revise the common conception of it as Plato's first, rather flawed, attempt at addressing the issues of the *Republic*. Instead of seeing the *Gorgias* as a bad *Republic*,[14] we can understand it as presenting the methods, and the problems inherent in them, for persuading distinct types of interlocutors of SV, particularly in an inadequate, non-ideal political situation.[15]

3.3 GORGIAS, SOCRATES, AND SV

By the time Gorgias finally provides an answer that satisfies Socrates to the "What is F?" question about rhetoric, we have learned a bit about him and Socrates. Socrates, applying his techne-analogy, has pressed Gorgias to specify what sort of persuasion rhetoric is and what subject matter it is about (454a6–b1). After five Stephanus pages, Gorgias at last responds:

> I say that [the rhetorical art] is about this persuasion: persuasion in law courts and in other mobs, as I was saying even now, and it is about these things: things that are just and unjust. (454b5–7)

Gorgias has specified a domain of expertise over which his techne reigns: things that are just and unjust. If, as he has claimed, he himself is an expert rhetor and thus a possessor of the rhetorical techne, then he must be an expert at things just and unjust. This implication of Gorgias' claim is never made explicit, but it has an active and important role in the argument to

[13] See 3.8.
[14] That is, as supplying poor arguments in support of the idea that doing injustice is always worse than suffering it.
[15] Thus, as many commentators would agree, the *Gorgias* does point the way to the *Republic*; see Ober (1998), 211–13.

come.[16] No scholar that I am aware of, however, is struck by the fact that we have an example here of an interlocutor who claims to know what is just and unjust but whose claim to expert knowledge of virtue is not challenged by Socrates. There is a clear opening at this point for Socrates to seize on the avowal of knowledge *itself* as an object of critique in the way he does in any other dialogue where a character claims knowledge of virtue or a virtue; but he does not. While Socrates and his interlocutors sometimes agree on specific examples of virtuous actions, or even of types of virtuous action – perhaps prosecuting the wrongdoer in the *Euthyphro*, or Socrates' and Laches' brave retreat in the *Laches* – no interlocutor ever claims expert knowledge of virtue and then walks away from Socrates unchallenged. Moreover, Socrates often uses such an avowal of knowledge as an opportunity to contrast it with his own disavowal of techne-knowledge of what virtue is.[17]

In the next stretch of argument (454c–455a), however, Socrates draws a distinction between learning and being convinced, and gets Gorgias to agree that there are two forms of persuasion: the former being persuasion with, the latter persuasion without, knowledge. Socrates then specifies that the sort of persuasion Gorgias effects in "law courts and other mobs" is persuasion "without knowledge," the reason for this being that it would not be possible to teach (that is, persuade *with* knowledge) so many people in so short a time about such important matters (μεγάλα πράγματα) (455a5–6). John Cooper sees Socratic irony here in Socrates' suggestion that the problem is one of time (and, I would add, perhaps numbers), instead of Gorgias' lack of expert knowledge of what virtue is, as one who had read other dialogues – particularly the dialogues of definition – would expect.[18] One might also suspect some playfulness at work on Socrates' part insofar as there appears to be a clear opening to refute Gorgias at this point, and not in the way he will eventually refute him. The Socrates of the *Euthyphro*, we might imagine, would be "delighted" at Gorgias' claim, employing a profusion of conditional irony: "if you have knowledge of what is just and unjust and can teach it to me, I would be forever grateful," "if rhetoric is the techne that teaches such things, and you are the possessor of that techne, then you have (according to *Apology* 20d–e at least) a wisdom that is more than human, and rhetoric is a divine techne." After such remarks

[16] Cooper (1999b), 34–5 argues that by this point Gorgias has made the crucial admission that will lead Socrates, when he assumes his own moral psychology, to be able to elicit a contradiction from Gorgias' views. Cooper makes an excellent case that this admission is made considerably earlier than either commentators or Polus have noticed.

[17] See the discussion in chapter one.

[18] Cooper (1999), 35.

Socrates would proceed to have Gorgias tell him, since he knows, what exactly justice and injustice are. Once Gorgias failed to answer the "What is F?" question adequately, Socrates would show that he does not possess the techne he claimed to after all, and poor Socrates had not found the teacher he had hoped for. But this never happens. Amazingly, Socrates lets pass the opportunity to investigate the question "What is justice?" and to examine a person who appears to claim knowledge of what is just and unjust. From the perspective of the outer frame, it is difficult not to notice how different this tack is from Socrates' in the dialogues of definition. We should recognize that if Socrates *had* pursued the line of argument sketched above rhetoric would in fact *be*, given Gorgias' claim, the ethical techne for which Socrates is searching. There would be no difference between the rhetorical expert and the moral expert. Socrates might show that Gorgias is no rhetorical expert, that is, no ethical expert after all, but the long-sought after field of moral expertise would have a name: rhetoric.[19] But this is not how Socrates proceeds with Gorgias, and as we consider how he does, we might ask ourselves why not.

Once Gorgias has agreed that rhetoric generates the persuasion of conviction (without knowledge), Socrates backs his way into asking a question on behalf of Gorgias' potential students. Socrates had suggested that when the city must make decisions it surely ought to choose the one who is most skilled (τεχνικώτατον, 455b5). If the city is discussing walls, then builders ought to be consulted; if the question is occupation of territory, then generals ought to give advice. He then poses a question to Gorgias, taking on the persona of a potential student:

> Gorgias, what will we get if we associate with you? On what matters will we be able to advise the city? Will it be only about the just, and the unjust, or will it also be on the matters about which Socrates was just speaking? (455d2–4)

Socrates is arguing strangely here. Of course, the question of how one ought to proceed in order to occupy territory and the question of whether territory ought to be occupied in the first place are entirely different. Let

[19] I think this is further evidence that Plato is not simply hostile to rhetoric without qualification. The defeat that the question "What is rhetoric?" suffers at Socrates' hand is the same as the defeat that all proposed answers to "What is virtue?" suffer in the dialogues of definition. But no one thinks that Socrates and Plato are not serious about virtue. Although this would take me too far afield to discuss in detail, it seems to me that Plato believes that one with ethical knowledge would be an expert rhetor. Socrates says as much in the opening of the *Apology*, where he denies being a rhetor, unless that means one who speaks the truth (17b), and also at the end of the *Gorgias* (503b, 504d), where he distinguishes between a proper, true rhetoric, which aims at making souls as excellent as possible and is a true skill, and rhetoric as it is usually practiced. The *Phaedrus* is also clearly relevant here.

us call the former a "technical" question, to be answered by an expert in particular area – the general in this case; let us call the latter a "political-cum-ethical" one. Now Gorgias has *already stated* what the distinct subject matter of rhetoric is: the just and the unjust (454b7). That is, rhetoric deals with political-cum-ethical questions: "*Should* territory be occupied?", "*Should* a wall be built?" and so on. Rhetoric is the skill that effects persuasion about these questions in groups such as the Athenian Assembly. Socrates can only be acting willfully ignorant when he conflates this type of question with the technical type. Further in the passage above, the "prospective student" asks: will rhetoric *only* be about the just and unjust? Does Socrates not see that the questions about whether territory should be occupied or not are questions about virtue? Later in the dialogue (517e ff.) he certainly does. What sort of questions might a rhetor discuss with a group that are *only* about the just and the unjust? Criminal cases like Socrates'?

These objections and questions occur to us in the outer frame, but they do not occur to Gorgias in the inner, and that is significant. He replies at once to Socrates, pointing out that Socrates himself has led the way with his examples of dockyards and wall-building. Gorgias does not draw any distinction between political-cum-ethical questions and technical ones. Instead, he points to empirical facts: the ones who got the walls to be built were orators – Themistocles and Pericles – not architects. In fact, Gorgias points out, whenever there is the sort of choice to be made that Socrates was talking about, the rhetors always give advice, and their decrees always win (456a1–3). Socrates professes a long-standing amazement at this fact; he claims that it is what has led him for a long time to wonder what the *dunamis* of rhetoric is (as he asked at the very beginning of the dialogue) and to consider this *dunamis* something divine.[20] Gorgias appears to relax at this point, since Socrates seems to be catching on to the wonder of rhetoric at last:

> If only you knew everything, Socrates – namely, that rhetoric has collected together under itself so to speak all of the powers. (456a7–8)

[20] We have grounds later, of course, for seeing irony here. The cause of the persuasive power of rhetoric *as it is practiced* is not divinity, but the fact that it appeals to the gratification of the appetites of people who are ignorant about what parts of them ought to be gratified. Socrates takes this up at the beginning of the Polus episode when he draws a distinction between skills and "knacks," and elaborates on it further in his long (rhetorical) speech against Callicles, after the point where Callicles has ceased to be an engaged interlocutor (see below). But in another sense Socrates is not simply being disingenuous. We have just seen that, if Gorgias truly knew what he claimed, he would be a moral expert, and we know from the *Apology* that Socrates believes that someone who had techne-knowledge of virtue, which he disavows, would have a knowledge "more than human." The irony at work then seems to be conditional irony.

Gorgias' claim is interesting. He has the idea of a superordinate techne, a techne that rules over and controls other technai.[21] He already showed this earlier, when he bragged that with the rhetorical techne one is in control of the doctor, the trainer, and the money-maker (452e). This is a feature as well of true, philosophical rhetoric as Socrates sees it in the final speech (517e ff.). But in what follows Gorgias explains that such a powerful ability can be misused. This speech is important because it is here that he displays a commitment to SV.

Gorgias begins by offering Socrates a "great proof" (μέγα τεκμήριον, 456b1) that this superordinate status for rhetoric is true.[22] When Gorgias travels with his brother, who is a doctor, or with some other doctors, he is able to persuade the patient to submit to treatment even when the doctors cannot, and he does this not with medical skill, nor with any craft other than rhetoric (456b).[23] The power (*dunamis*) of rhetoric is here clearly shown, which is what Socrates has been seeking all along (447c1–2). A doctor, with medical knowledge alone, is impotent to get the patient actually to *do* anything, even though he knows what the patient *ought* to do. It is only persuasion, in the absence of force,[24] that is effective, that in fact provides the power for other technai. Without persuasion, walls and harbors would not get built, patients would not take medicine. It is easy to think of a beneficial and extremely useful role for rhetoric here.[25] In contemporary medicine one of the primary problems faced in questions of public health revolves around the question of persuasion: how do we get people to do what they are supposed to do? People notoriously fail to diet, exercise, follow medication regimens, and so on. An effective Gorgias would be a wonderful asset. Of course, as advertising for fast food restaurants makes clear, one's persuasive power could also easily be used to get a person to behave in ways contrary to those that a doctor would recommend. The

[21] The claim that a techne of virtue would be a superordinate techne can be seen in the *Charmides*' knowledge of knowledge (170c ff., 174b) and the *Euthydemus*' discussion of a "royal craft" (βασιλικὴ τέχνη, 291c4–5).

[22] In chapters one and two we saw μεγάλα τεκμήρια in the *Ap*. and *Cr*. consisting of particular anecdotes from a person's life that illustrate the point being made. It is the same with Gorgias' use of the phrase here.

[23] It may be worth noting that at 456b3 Gorgias makes clear that he is persuading some individual patient (τινα), and so not employing persuasion simply among a mob or group, which has been the emphasis until this point, and which will be important in the next example as well.

[24] Which may be alluded to by Gorgias at 452d5–8, when he says that rhetoric provides what is in truth the greatest good and the cause of freedom for human beings and at the same time of one ruling over others in the city. See Cooper (1999b) 33, n. 5 and also the beginning of *Rep*. 1 and the very end of the *Charmides* for the force/persuasion opposition. In his *Helen* the historical Gorgias *equates* persuasion (πειθώ) and force (βία).

[25] Beversluis (2000), 304–5 makes a similar point in the context of "defending" Gorgias.

specter of a doctor advocating the right medicine for a patient competing with an orator working not in the service of the doctor but of an evil-doer is chilling.[26]

Matters get even more chilling in the next example. Gorgias goes on to exclaim that a rhetor could get himself chosen over any technical professional in any city given that the decision was going to be made "with speech" (τῷ λόγῳ) by a group or mob (πλήθος) (456b6–c7).[27] He had used himself in the first example, and one can understand it positively when we imagine him coming to the aid of his brother and a sick patient by persuading the patient to submit to medical treatment that is beneficial. Gorgias, however, puts his second example impersonally. He imagines a doctor and an orator coming into a city and competing for who should be chosen doctor.[28] The orator, he claims, would always win out. This is a much more nefarious example. Gorgias imagines a qualified, knowledgeable doctor being passed over as state physician for a skilled speaker with no knowledge of medicine. This certainly does exhibit the *power* of rhetoric, but it seems to be the ability to deceive and to achieve a crucially important position in the city without any thought of merit or qualification. The potential danger this poses to a community is manifest.

Assessment of Gorgias' position is hampered by the lack of distinction between technical issues and political-cum-ethical issues. It is of course absurd to have someone who knows nothing about wall-building build walls, but it is equally absurd to have only wall-builders decide whether or not a city is best off with walls. It is difficult to believe that Plato did not deliberately leave this distinction unclear here, for he has Socrates expound it at length later in the dialogue (511c ff.) when Socrates makes the distinction between a skill that can save a life – for example, swimming or piloting a ship – and one that could determine whether a life is *worth* saving or not. The latter, Socrates says, would be an achievement worthy of some pride.

In Gorgias' imagined contest, then, which skill are they competing over? If he understands this under the technical model, as seems more to the point of Gorgias' actual example since it picks up on Socrates' earlier speech about how one ought to choose the best craftsman, then the orator is simply a

[26] As I have remarked above, this point seems in keeping with the Platonic theme of goodness and truth, embodied in Socrates, being utterly ineffective and unpersuasive, and so suffering the fate of the historical Socrates.

[27] Beversluis (2000), ch. 14, in defending Gorgias' character, does not mention this part of Gorgias' speech, nor does he refer to his earlier comments that with rhetoric he can have other skilled professionals, including the doctor, as his slaves (452e).

[28] There was an established post as state physician as early as the sixth century. See Dodds (1959), 208.

persuasive impostor and the example seems entirely nefarious. If, on the other hand, the question is a political-cum-ethical one, and the orator, as Gorgias has claimed and Socrates has not examined, in fact *has* knowledge of the just and the unjust, then orators winning out on these sorts of questions might be a good thing: indeed it would sound reminiscent of both the sought after "royal craft" in the *Euthydemus* and the philosopher-king of the *Republic*.[29] Rhetoric in this sense once again collapses into the ethical expertise Socrates is searching for.

After raising this frightening specter of various impostors filling important positions in a city via their techne of persuasion, Gorgias moves quickly to point out that although rhetoric, like any competitive techne – he specifically brings up examples of fighting (and so of using force) – may be used unjustly and wrongly, it should not be. Teachers hand over such competitive skills for just use against enemies and "those doing wrong" (τοὺς ἀδικοῦντας, 456e4). Gorgias makes clear that rhetoric *should* only be used justly and correctly, although it *could*, like any other powerful competitive techne, be misused.

This argument against misuse shows that Gorgias is at least verbally committed to SV.[30] He allows no exception to his claim that rhetoric (and indeed all other technai) must always be used justly (456e3, 457c1) and towards wrongdoers, pointing out that a provider of a techne furnishes the techne for this kind of use only. He emphasizes repeatedly what *must/ought to* be done with respect to the use of rhetoric and similar competitive skills, using the verb δεῖ six times in about thirty lines (456c7, d1, d4, d8, 457b2, b6). Gorgias on his own, then, has brought up SV: an orator's actions, like anyone's, must always be just.[31] But oratory itself, like any other skill, does

[29] See 4.4 and 4.8.

[30] Unless one wishes to argue that this speech is somehow disingenuous on Gorgias' part. Such a supposition, however, remains pure speculation in the absence of any textual evidence that Gorgias holds views incompatible with it. Indeed, Gorgias later concedes (460a3–4), quite easily as Cooper (1999b), 38 emphasizes, that he would teach a student what is just and unjust "if he happened not to know."

[31] Cooper (1999b), 44–5, n. 20: "In any event, [Gorgias] does not think (a) that acting justly must always be best, and he does not think (b) that the knowledge of justice that he imparts and possesses itself dictates just action always [my letters]." I agree with Cooper that Gorgias rejects (b) in some sense. But depending on what Cooper means by "best" in (a), I think he may be wrong about that. Gorgias *does* say that acting justly is how one must act, and he does not leave room for exceptions. If by "best" Cooper means "in one's own self-interest," then the question has not come up, and perhaps Gorgias, like most people, would not believe that acting justly is always in one's own self-interest. But Gorgias is explicit that, regardless, *one ought not to act unjustly*. He clearly realizes that the power of an orator could easily be used contrary to justice and in the self-interest of the speaker, as ordinarily conceived, as he explains in his speech against misuse (456c–457c). But then he goes on to rule out (for reasons that are not explored) such unjust use as absolutely unacceptable.

not guarantee correct, just use. That is why, Gorgias rather self-servingly mentions, one should punish the misuser of rhetoric, and not the teacher. This explains too Gorgias' lauding of rhetoric. If it is the most powerful of all crafts (collecting all the others "under it"), then, assuming it is used correctly (which, according to Gorgias, is to use it justly), it would indeed be a wonderful thing.

We do not know much about Gorgias' endorsement of SV: what is his conception of virtue? Does he keep SV foremost in his mind when making particular decisions? All we have is his verbal commitment to it, and Socrates does not pursue the issue further with him. After Gorgias has been refuted, Socrates says it would take a long time to discuss adequately the matters that have been raised (461a7–b2); but, with a brief exception that we will consider below, he never gets the chance to do so with Gorgias.

We have, however, some reason to be skeptical about the extent of Gorgias' commitment to SV. Plato's portrayal of Gorgias is quite careful, and it may be worth considering it in a little more detail. Gorgias is not a humble person: he is presented as thinking highly of himself and his craft (449a). He has been giving epideictic displays during the day, and when Socrates speaks of his desire to hear Gorgias answer some questions, Gorgias not only proclaims that it is part of what he professes to answer any question that is asked, but also that "no one has asked me anything new for many years" (448a2–3). This is a striking detail, that I think should be kept in mind while reading the entire *Gorgias*. Plato includes it as a sign to the reader that Gorgias (and Polus and Callicles as well, I think) have never been questioned by someone like Socrates. They are not familiar with the particular modes of his questioning, nor will they have reflected on their lives and professions in the way that Socrates' examination forces them to.[32]

Consider, by contrast, Chairephon, who is also included in the dialogue. Chairephon is most famous as the person who, Socrates reports in the *Apology* (20e ff.), asked the oracle of Delphi whether anyone was wiser than Socrates. At the opening of the *Gorgias* Socrates blames his and Chairephon's lateness on Chairephon's forcing them to spend time in the agora (447a7–8). As any reader of the dialogues knows, the agora is where Socrates spends most of his time questioning people and where, presumably, his young followers (like Chairephon), who have picked up on

[32] We might contrast this with *Socrates'* relationship to the three of them: he knows Gorgias and comes seeking to ask him a question (as we noted above); he indicates that he has just read Polus' work (462b11–c1); and he makes clear that he has been watching and listening to Callicles and his friends (481d5–6; 487c).

his method, enjoy exposing the ignorance of others.[33] Indeed, Chairephon begins the questioning for Socrates in the *Gorgias*. In a rather elaborate roundabout construction (with the more junior characters playing intermediaries between Socrates and Gorgias), once Callicles tells Socrates that Gorgias answers questions and engages in discussion as well as giving speeches, Socrates tells Chairephon to ask Gorgias who he is (447c–d). When Chairephon asks what Socrates means by this, Socrates provides a two-line example: if someone were a maker of shoes, he would answer that he is a cobbler. Chairephon immediately understands, and is himself able to start the questioning in Socratic fashion. As things turn out Polus butts in, and so Chairephon asks him on Gorgias' behalf. I take it that the point of all this is to show Chairephon's intimate familiarity with Socrates and his methods of questioning, by contrast not only with Polus (who cannot even seem to distinguish clearly between saying what a thing is and what a thing is like, and begins to answer in set, formal speeches [448c]), but also with Gorgias and Callicles.[34] This dramatic material at the beginning, then, serves to remind a careful reader of the newness of the discussions in which the major interlocutors will be involved.

The other important aspect of Gorgias as Plato depicts him is that he is attracted by the *power* of rhetorical skill. As we have seen, this is not necessarily a bad thing. If one uses power to good ends, that is wonderful. Of course, to the extent that one has bad ends, the more powerful one is the more damage he can do. Scholars of the *Gorgias* tend to divide up into two camps about its eponymous character. In one camp, Socrates misleadingly and sophistically leads a (mostly) innocent and well-meaning Gorgias to contradict himself. He does this primarily by foisting on Gorgias unargued for and controversial Socratic premises which Gorgias does not dispute, but should.[35] According to the other, Gorgias is an amoral purveyor of an extremely dangerous weapon, and does not care how it is used.[36] There is textual evidence to support both of these readings. I suggest, however, that we think about the issue from the perspective of the outer frame: Plato depicts Gorgias as a character who, never having been asked such questions before, reveals himself to be attracted to a power that can be used, apparently, either for good or for ill. We have seen that, while

[33] See *Ap*. 23c.

[34] See the discussion of Polus below. Chairephon also speaks immediately before the "Callicles episode" in a way that once again shows his deep familiarity with Socrates (481b–c). See Vasiliou (2002a), 229 for a discussion of this passage.

[35] See, e.g., Beversluis (2000), ch. 14; Grote (1875).

[36] Dodds (1959), 15; Kahn (1983); Rutherford (1995).

Gorgias advocates the good and just use of this power, he also shows a clear awareness of and satisfaction with it that seems, if not positively ill-willed, at least insufficiently concerned with its moral implications.[37]

Aside from the nature of the alleged contradiction that Socrates elicits in Gorgias' views, Gorgias has views about rhetoric that are in some tension with each other. While he, without Socratic prompting, recognizes that the subject matter of rhetoric is questions about the just and the unjust, and that rhetoric is a tool that must only be used justly, he at the same time brags to others about, and is clearly himself impressed by, the awesome power rhetoric has to achieve any ends whatsoever. If indeed rhetoric is as powerful as Gorgias claims – and Socrates, with his wonder at the effects of the speeches of Themistocles and Pericles, seems to agree that it is – then it would be of the utmost importance for him to keep SV uppermost in his mind. Power enables a person to do whatever he thinks best. With such freedom a person who does not always aim to do the virtuous action above all (or to avoid any action that is contrary to virtue) or who thinks he knows what the virtuous action is but does not[38] runs the risk of doing great harm. Questioned by Socrates, Gorgias endorses SV. But we will see that his followers in the discussion in different ways do not. In a memorable line, E. R. Dodds writes: "Gorgias' teaching is the seed of which the Calliclean way of life is the poisonous fruit."[39] If we take this image literally, I do not agree. A seed, given appropriate conditions, can only bear *one* sort of fruit. Not so with Gorgias' rhetoric. Rhetoric as taught by Gorgias has a good chance of growing into Calliclean fruit, and no doubt Plato intends his reader to see this. But Gorgias' teaching does not necessarily have to.[40] In a more extensive discussion, having agreed at least verbally to SV, Gorgias might be educable to a more Socratic way of looking at things: his views do not lead with necessity to the views of a Callicles. Gorgias has something to learn from the Socrates of the *Apology* and *Crito*, and in his agreement

[37] At 452e, Gorgias replies to Socrates' claim that the doctor, physical trainer, and money-maker might each (as Gorgias has) maintain that his techne provides the greatest good for human beings. Gorgias says that with rhetoric you can have the doctor and physical trainer as your slaves; and the money-maker will turn out to make money for you. At 456b6–c7, as we saw above, Gorgias boasts of the orator's ability to be chosen in place of a real doctor by a group. Even though immediately after this he says that this ability ought only to be used justly, he cannot resist mentioning *again* that, while the orator ought not to deprive a craftsman of his reputation, of course he *could* (457b3). Also, at 459c3–5, Gorgias asks Socrates whether it isn't a great relief (πολλὴ ῥᾳστώνη) to not have to learn the rest of the crafts, but only one: rhetoric.

[38] I shall argue in chapter four that Euthyphro is an extreme example of the latter.

[39] Dodds (1959), 15.

[40] By the end of the dialogue, as we shall see, Socrates defends a rhetoric that is both committed to SV and has expert knowledge of what virtue is.

to SV has shown himself to possess enough common ground with Socrates to make progress. But, as we have seen, the Socrates of the *Gorgias* has indeed something he needs to learn from Gorgias as well; or so I argue the consideration of the outer frame suggests. And the Socrates of the *Apology* and *Crito* is not exactly the same as the Socrates of the *Gorgias*, for the interlocutors who follow do not share Socrates' belief in SV, and, as Socrates said, between those who differ on this question "there can be no common counsel" (*Crito* 49d2–3). The Socrates of the *Gorgias* will try to find, if not a common counsel, then some way of having a discussion about ethical questions with Polus and Callicles. Perhaps he might need some rhetoric after all.

3.4 POLUS AND SV[41]

Socrates operates both in the *Apology* and the *Gorgias* with the standard tripartition of goods into goods of the soul, goods of the body, and external goods. But he recognizes and employs not only the concept of a good *of* the soul, but also the concept of a good *for* the soul. Whenever SV or its corollary, that it is better to suffer than to do injustice ("the principle about justice"), is brought up, it is beyond doubt that the sense in which it is better to suffer is not to be understood in terms of either any benefit to one's body or any gain in one's possessions.

It is important to understand that SV is based on two distinct claims. First, the idea that a state of soul, *simply as such*, can be a harm or benefit, entirely independently of its effect on one's body or one's possessions. Second, of course, is the claim that this sort of harm and benefit – harm and benefit to one's soul – is of a type of importance that trumps any benefits or harms to the body or to the state of one's possessions. Scholars have put almost all of their emphasis on the second claim, since it appears to be the most controversial, and have paid little or no attention to the fact that it depends on the first. I want to emphasize that the first is not only a substantive and independent claim, which does not follow simply from the idea that one has a soul or that certain states of soul might be beneficial to a person by providing him with certain external goods, but also that it is necessary to appreciate this claim before one can even *understand* the second. I shall argue that the text repeatedly shows that Polus does not in fact grasp this first claim. Polus stands in marked contrast to Crito and Gorgias in this respect. As we shall see below, Callicles' relationship to these claims is even more complex.

[41] Material in this section overlaps to some extent with Vasiliou (2002b), §2.0.

While Polus recognizes actions that are conventionally and typically called "just" and "unjust," he does not understand that he has a soul or character, which is a locus of harm or benefit independently of the state of his body or of his possessions. Polus does, of course, recognize that there is such a thing as soul, as every Greek would. Further, he has no trouble acknowledging the standard tripartition of goods (e.g., 467e), and thus that there are goods *of* the soul. He also recognizes the value of the crafts. The speech he tries to begin at 448c4 provides an account of how they arose for human beings. When he insists on rhetoric being the finest of the crafts, he is clearly recognizing that it is valuable and desirable, and in addition Polus would, if asked, agree that this skill is a sort of knowledge that resides in his soul. Nevertheless Polus does not grasp the necessary background for understanding SV. In particular he fails to understand the idea that the soul might *itself* be benefited by having the knowledge of rhetoric. Rather, because of the power of rhetoric, he believes that *he*, *Polus*, is benefited insofar as he can obtain whatever he wants. Although he recognizes that possession of rhetoric is a valuable thing, the explanation of that value will always be in terms of the power it provides its possessor to procure whatever goods of the body and possessions he desires. I shall argue that Polus does not have the very concept of a good *for* the soul – a concept that is necessary even to understand SV, let alone to agree or disagree with it.[42]

Let us now turn to the text for evidence that I have accurately described Polus' character. As we have seen, at the opening of the dialogue Socrates does not simply ask *what* Gorgias' craft is, but what the *power* of the craft is (447c1). Polus makes his first appearance, for about a Stephanus page (448a–e), when he pushes himself into the conversation by claiming that Gorgias is tired and that he would be happy to answer questions about what Gorgias does in Gorgias' place. Chairephon therefore asks *him* what Gorgias' craft is, and he responds that, although there are many crafts, the best men share in the best of them, and that Gorgias "shares in the finest of crafts" (τῆς καλλίστης τῶν τεχνῶν, 448c9). Socrates criticizes Polus for failing to answer the question asked because he merely told them what

[42] Polus' lack of appreciation of goods *for* the soul marks him as quite a different character from Callicles. Dodds (1959), 12 describes Polus, and believes that Plato sees Polus, as an utterly despicable character, claiming: "Plato had far more sympathy with a Callicles." If I am right about Polus, we can understand why this is so: Callicles recognizes the soul as a locus of harm and benefit, while Polus does not. The states of soul that Callicles values are not, of course, the conventional states – the canonical virtues, as typically understood. Rather, he values what Cooper (1999b), 70 calls "appetite-gratification"; see also pp. 51–75 on the relationship between Socrates' and Callicles' competing conceptions of the good life. The state of soul that Callicles admires is one which has enlarged appetites and the power to fulfill them. See below, 3.7.

Gorgias' craft is *like*, not what it *is*, at which point Gorgias takes over the discussion. We learn from Gorgias that, while each particular craft is able to achieve only its own good, its own result, the wonderful thing about rhetoric is that it can obtain whatever it wants by persuading anyone of anything. As an expert rhetor Gorgias can acquire all of the goods of the first-order crafts because he can persuade all of the experts to do as he pleases. Gorgias' claims, essentially an advertisement for his wares, would be quite familiar to Polus. And we can be reasonably sure, once we have listened to Polus later (for example, his praise of the tyrant [468e ff.]), that such claims about the *power* of rhetoric are what gets his attention. We can begin, then, to understand Polus' "conception of the fine": what is finest is what is most powerful, and what is most powerful is what is able to secure any of the products and things one wants. It is no surprise that he interrupts when Socrates asks what the "power" of rhetoric is.

Once Polus takes up the role of questioner (462b ff.), we discover that Socrates denies that rhetoric is a craft at all, maintaining instead that it is a kind of "knack" (ἐμπειρία) for producing a certain gratification and pleasure (462c), just like cookery (ὀψοποιία) (462d8–e4).[43] Socrates then says that he is reluctant to say more for fear that he might insult Gorgias because he is not sure whether his views about rhetoric apply to the sort that Gorgias practices.[44] When Gorgias tells him not to be ashamed to speak, Socrates explains that (1) rhetoric is a part of flattery which is an image (εἴδωλον) of a part of politics (463d1), and that (2) it is shameful, since Socrates calls all bad things (τὰ κακά) shameful (αἰσχρά) (463d4).

When Socrates undertakes to explain these two claims, we should note that he engages Gorgias in the discussion and not Polus. Why does he revert back to Gorgias as discussant at this point in the midst of the "Polus episode"?[45] The progression of the interchange is composed quite artfully

[43] One thing this interlude shows is that Polus has learned nothing about how to answer Socratic questions. In his first rude intrusion he answered the question of what techne rhetoric is by saying that it is the finest (448c–e). Here Socrates makes the point that it is not a craft at all but a "knack" for producing pleasure and gratification. But, to Socrates' mind, he has not yet answered the "What is F?" question about rhetoric since his answer is too broad and will include activities like cookery, which is also a knack aimed at pleasure and gratification. But Polus is already satisfied. At 462c7–8 Polus asks whether rhetoric is fine, and Socrates reprimands him for thinking that he has already said what rhetoric is. Polus has not learned anything from listening to the argument with Gorgias. This may further support the idea that a special approach, with special arguments, is needed for Polus; he cannot even follow the argument offered to Gorgias.

[44] This foreshadows later references to the usefulness and value of a rhetoric that is a techne that aims at the good: 480a–481b and 527c. Also recall the opening of the *Apology*, when Socrates denies that he is a rhetor, unless a rhetor is one who speaks the truth (17b5, 18a5).

[45] Beversluis (2000), 319–21 notes the switch in interlocutors, and the questions addressed specifically to Gorgias, but he offers no explanation of this.

and purposefully. Gorgias enters the conversation by saying that he does not understand what Socrates is saying and Socrates agrees that he is not saying anything clear, "but Polus the Colt is fresh and frisky" (463e1). Socrates' response refers to his claim that rhetoric is shameful, blaming his premature verdict on Polus' overanxiousness to hear whether he thinks rhetoric is shameful or not without first being clear about what he says that rhetoric is. As we have seen, from the moment Polus first rudely pushes his way into the dialogue (448c–e), he shows an inability to distinguish a question about what F is from one about what F is like. In this section as well Polus has no patience with an investigation into what rhetoric is, but only wants to argue about whether it is fine (i.e., powerful) or not (see also 462c8 ff.). When Socrates blames Polus' lack of clarity on his inappropriate insistence, Gorgias tells Socrates to "let this one [Polus] alone, and tell *me* (ἐμοί)" and makes clear that what he himself is puzzled by is the claim that rhetoric is an image, that is, Socrates' claim about the nature of rhetoric (463e3–4).

Socrates replies that he will try to tell Gorgias what he thinks rhetoric is. What follows is a short preliminary argument (464a1–464b1), which ensures that Gorgias agrees to and grasps certain key ideas. I shall turn to this below. But first we should note that, once this preliminary argument ends, Socrates says, "Come then, *for you* [Gorgias] [φέρε δὴ σοι] I will try to show more clearly what I mean, if I am able" (464b2).[46] What follows is a relatively long speech by Socrates in which he distinguishes between the technai and the pseudo-technai. Near the end of the speech, when Socrates returns to the question of why flattery is shameful, he makes explicit that his intended audience has switched back to Polus: "for this I am saying to *you* [τοῦτο γὰρ πρός σε λέγω], Polus" (465a1), which marks an explicit contrast with 464b2.

In the discussion that is prior to this speech (464a1–b1), Socrates secures Gorgias' recognition that there are not only goods of the soul, but also goods *for* the soul. These ten lines form a necessary preliminary to the speech that follows.[47] Unless Socrates can secure his interlocutor's agreement to certain propositions, there will be no point in proceeding. The passage begins:

[46] I have left the Greek word order at the beginning of the sentence, despite its awkwardness in English, so that it is clear that Socrates emphasizes that his speech ensues as a consequence of the agreement on the preceding points, and that it is explicitly aimed at Gorgias.

[47] While almost all commentators discuss Socrates' long speech, 464b ff., I can find virtually nothing said about these first ten lines. Irwin (1979), 133 rightly remarks that the first claim, that there are two things, body and soul, "is not meant to be a controversial move." But the passage proceeds to secure agreement to additional claims that *are* both controversial and crucial to what follows.

SOCRATES: . . . You call something body and soul?
GORGIAS: Of course.
SOCRATES: Then do you also suppose that there is some [kind of] good condition of each of these things [οὐκοῦν καὶ τούτων οἴει τινὰ εἶναι ἑκατέρου εὐεξίαν]?
GORGIAS: I do.

(464a1–3)

While the first step is uncontroversial, the second is not, and Socrates takes the trouble to mention it separately. Not only are there two things – body and soul – but *each* of them has its own good condition (εὐεξίαν) independently of the other. Socrates proceeds to claim that they each may have an *apparent* good condition, which is not the same as their being in a *truly* good condition; he illustrates this with what he takes to be the uncontroversial and obvious example of bodies that are only apparently in good condition (464a3–6). He then emphasizes that he is talking about an apparent and real good condition for the soul as well: "I say [λέγω] that there is such a thing *both* in the body *and* in the soul" (464a7–8).[48] Once Gorgias agrees with this, Socrates says that he will now explain to him (rather than to Polus) what he means by rhetoric being an image of politics. But what is important is that Socrates has thought it necessary, before his explanation could be intelligible, to see whether Gorgias grasps the idea that the soul itself is a locus of harm and benefit, as is the body. This is what Gorgias agrees to, but what Polus seems not to understand, and this is why this part of the conversation regresses to Gorgias.

Further, once Socrates finishes his speech, Polus shows no sign of having understood any of it, and especially not the idea of there being some areas of knowledge that improve the body *as opposed to* some that improve the soul. He sums up what Socrates has said as claiming that rhetoric is flattery (466a), and simply returns to Socrates' claim that flatterers, and therefore rhetors, are worthless (φαῦλοι) in the city. When Socrates denies that they have the greatest power in the city, claiming instead that they have the least, the well-known argument commences about whether the tyrant or the rhetor really does what he wants. Throughout this section, Polus shows no response to, let alone appreciation of, the idea that there is a good condition of soul as distinct from the body; he may, in fact, understand this, but we have not been shown that he does.[49] This point is made sharper

[48] The inclusion of λέγω may highlight the novelty and originality of the claim; it at least sharpens the issue of disagreement.

[49] Recall the sense in which I mean this: it is not that Polus does not recognize that the skill of rhetoric resides in the soul, and that he calls that fine, but if Polus is asked to explain what is fine about

by the fact that the critical part of the conversation, which refers to harming or benefiting the soul as opposed to the body, takes place with Gorgias and not Polus, although we are in the midst of the "Polus episode."

Since my concern is simply to provide an account of what sorts of harm and benefit Polus recognizes, I will only make one remark about the first major argument between Polus and Socrates (466a–468e). Whatever its other logical defects, one source of the problems with the argument arises from a short induction (467d) in which Socrates gets Polus to agree that, if anyone does something for the sake of something else, he does not want the thing he does, but the thing for the sake of which he does it. Commentators have been surprised at the easy acceptance of such a plain falsehood.[50] Furthermore, it appears to contradict what Socrates says shortly afterwards (468c4).[51] I think that this manhandling of the difference between means and ends at least shows that Polus is unclear on the concept. He has the idea of doing something for the sake of something else, but he has no clear conception of doing something for its own sake. All Polus agrees to is that some things are good, some bad, and some intermediate, and that we act for the sake of good things. The idea that there may be a benefit or harm to one's soul, independently of the effect on one's body or the state of one's possessions, requires both the idea of a good in itself and the idea of the soul as a locus of harm and benefit. A benefit to the soul may also be a means to bring about some benefit to the body or to the state of one's possessions, but, in order to appreciate what the principle about justice claims, one has to have the notion of a good in itself.[52] When Socrates says that he could be killed but not harmed, he relies on the idea that the soul is a locus of harm and benefit entirely independent of any effect on the body. Therefore, whatever else this argument may be doing, it contributes to showing the reader that Polus does not have a clear grasp of the concepts necessary to understand Socrates' principle about justice.

Polus does make reference in this argument to "goods of the soul."[53] At 466e9–12, Polus agrees with Socrates' suggestion that doing what seems best

rhetoric, why it is a good thing, he will explain it entirely in terms of the external goods which might be procured by means of it.

[50] See McTighe (1984/1992), 267 ff.; and Irwin (1979), 14 ff. For a clear and persuasive interpretation of the argument see Segvic (2000), esp. 40–5.

[51] See Vlastos (1991) 303–4, additional note 8.4. Vlastos, after attempting to straighten out the argument, admits that the text as it stands "betrays an area of unclarity in [Plato's] thinking." I am not sure, however, that the confusion is Plato's own, rather than shown to us by Plato as Polus'.

[52] In 6.2 I argue that, when Glaucon and Adeimantus ask Socrates to show that justice is a good "in itself" in *Republic* 2, they are asking him to show them how it is a good *for* the soul.

[53] John Cooper called this point to my attention.

to one is good only if one has intelligence (νοῦς). This is part of Socrates' attempt to force Polus to confront his earlier claim that rhetoric is not a craft. Socrates wants Polus to show him that rhetors have intelligence and possess a craft (466e13–467a1). But when Polus concedes the importance of intelligence here, there is no evidence that he sees intelligence as a good in itself, or that he thinks that being intelligent might in itself be better for a person's soul than not. Nothing in this passage rules out such a possibility, but I shall contend that, given subsequent exchanges, it is quite unlikely.

From the end of this argument (468e) until the beginning of the dispute about the principle about justice (474c), there is little sustained argumentation. I believe, however, that Plato repeatedly signals to the reader that Polus simply has no clear grasp of the idea that acting justly or unjustly might in itself constitute some harm or benefit for a person's soul.

> POLUS: I suppose you wouldn't choose to have the liberty to do what you think fit in the city, rather than lack it, Socrates, and you aren't envious whenever you see that someone has killed or expropriated or imprisoned anyone he thought fit.
> SOCRATES: Justly or unjustly, are you saying?
> POLUS: Whichever he does, isn't it something to envy both ways?
> SOCRATES: Quiet, Polus.
>
> (468e–469a)

Here Polus envisions a person who can exercise his power without fear of any punishment, doing whatever he sees fit.[54] When Socrates queries whether the allegedly enviable person is acting justly or unjustly, Polus expresses what I think is genuine puzzlement about Socrates' question. Polus is not simply *disagreeing* with Socrates, or disputing Socrates' claim that it *does* make a difference; he simply has no idea how it *could*. This is the position of Polus with respect to the idea that the soul might itself be a locus of harm and benefit.

Socrates then tells Polus that he believes that doing injustice is the greatest of evils. Polus replies: "Is this the greatest? Isn't suffering injustice greater?" (469b10). Read by itself, this response might appear to show that Polus concedes that doing injustice is indeed an evil in itself, but simply not the greatest of evils. But this interpretation would clash with the rest of the text, in which there is no hint that Polus understands the idea that doing injustice without material or bodily harm is nevertheless a harmful thing. A more consistent reading of this line sees Polus' response as sarcastically incredulous. Shortly afterwards, Polus engages twice in plain instances of

[54] See 6.5 for the importance of doing "whatever one wishes" in Glaucon's and Adeimantus' challenge.

similarly rude sarcasm (470c5, 473b8–9) when he tells Socrates that he will be difficult to refute, obviously meaning that he thinks Socrates will be easily refuted. This, together with Polus' brash interruption at the beginning of the dialogue (448a ff.), shows that such insolent behavior is in keeping with his character. Further, Polus immediately turns back to his challenge about whether Socrates would not choose to be a tyrant, so that he could kill, expel, and so on "following his own opinion" (469c). Polus has shown absolutely no reaction to Socrates' claim about the importance of justice and injustice, and so repeats the same point from 468e.

Socrates must try a different tack, and offers what Dodds calls "the Parable of the Lunatic with the Knife" (469c–e). Socrates asks whether the power exercised by someone who went through the agora with a hidden knife, stabbing whomever he pleased, would possess Polus' great and enviable power. Polus agrees that this is not what he had in mind. When Socrates asks him why this is not the power that he envies, Polus simply responds that someone who acts this way is bound to be punished, and punishment is a bad thing. We should remember here that the question at hand is about how the power being exercised might benefit or harm the agent. Asked this question, Polus can only conceive of the harm to one's body or the loss of one's possessions that punishment involves. As Polus will shortly make clear, if there is no prospect of punishment, then such acts (assuming there is some material gain) clearly benefit the agent.[55]

In response, Socrates reiterates his belief that one acts in a better, more beneficial, way whenever one acts justly (470b–c) – something Polus has by now shown himself not to comprehend, let alone agree with. To Socrates' claim that it is always more beneficial to act justly, Polus obnoxiously responds that "even a child could refute" him (470c4–5). I am not claiming, however, that Polus is simply being rude here; rather, he finds what Socrates is saying quite inscrutable. Polus is similarly baffled by Socrates' claim that he does not know whether the Great King of Persia is happy or unhappy since he does not know how he stands with respect to justice and education (470e). He then brings up what is, to his mind, the patently obvious counterexample of Archelaus, a slave who did "the greatest injustices" by lying, murdering and betraying those around him to gain power.

[55] We can usefully contrast this with the position of Protagoras in his "Great Speech" (*Pr.* 323c–324d). Protagoras argues that the practice of punishment is an indication that excellence is teachable. The point of punishment is to provide a benefit for the soul of the person being punished and for the souls of those who witness the punishment. Punishment is reasonable in that, although it harms a person's body and deprives him of external goods, it attempts to benefit his soul (and those who learn from his experience). It is thus clear that Protagoras, unlike Polus, understands the soul as a locus of harm and benefit.

To Polus, Archelaus engaged in what are clearly unjust acts, but since he had suffered no harm to his body and no loss of possessions (in fact, of course, he had gained greatly in these respects) he had suffered no harm whatsoever. Polus shares with Socrates a conventional notion of which actions count as unjust (unlike Callicles) but displays no awareness of a state of soul that might itself be benefited or harmed depending on the sort of actions one engages in.

After Polus' encomium to Archelaus, Socrates repeats their respective positions and reiterates his acceptance of the principle about justice, making the further connection, brought out by the example of Archelaus, that Polus thinks that acting unjustly without paying any just penalty will make a person happy. Socrates thinks that the doer of injustice is always wretched, and even more so if that person never has to pay a just penalty. He tells Polus that he will try to make Polus say the same things as he, for he regards Polus as a friend (473a). When Socrates repeats his acceptance of the principle about justice, he refers back to his earlier statement of it at 469b. This suggests that Socrates does not believe much headway has been made in the intervening time, and this fits well with the idea that Socrates and the reader have simply gotten a clearer picture of Polus' beliefs and character during these pages.

I have argued that Plato reveals Polus as a particular character-type, with a particular blind spot: the failure to recognize that the soul can be a locus of harm and benefit independently of the state of one's body or of one's possessions. I have claimed further that this is an additional conceptual step beyond simply acknowledging that we have a soul or character that is distinct from the body. I realize that my claim about Polus is difficult to prove since I am arguing for a negative: that Polus fails to understand something. Finding conclusive textual evidence that shows that someone does *not* understand or believe something is more problematic than proving that someone does. But I think that my understanding of Polus makes the best sense of the interactions between him and Socrates.[56]

Socrates' interaction with Polus is philosophically valuable as an examination of how to argue with such a character-type and show him that the soul itself may be harmed or benefited independently of the body. If I am right about Polus, Plato spends so much time showing the reader how Polus

[56] If one disagrees with my reading of Polus, it is incumbent upon him or her to explain in some other way what Plato thinks he is doing with the texts I have discussed, many of which contain either very little argument (e.g., the remarks about the Great King or Archelaus), or argument that is quite poor (467c–468e); the regression to Gorgias in the midst of the "Polus episode" requires some explanation as well.

reacts to Socrates' claims in order to display what type of character he is, and what sort of positive arguments such a character requires. We know that by the end of the discussion with Polus at 481b5 the latter will be saying, if reluctantly, the same things as Socrates, just as Socrates promises.[57] More importantly for the present purposes, however, Plato makes explicit the importance of certain underlying premises for SV. Before a person can be persuaded of SV, he must understand it, and in order to understand it, he must have the concept of a good for the soul. Polus' lack of such a concept makes him a radical interlocutor in a quite particular sense. Gorgias understands and accepts the idea that the soul can be in a condition that is good *for it*, without reference to bodily or material well-being. As we shall see next, Callicles appreciates that there is something that is good for the soul, but maintains that it is simply appetite gratification (pleasure). In this way Callicles is able to retain an ordinary conception of harm and benefit that is consonant with Polus', even though he revises the ordinary conception of justice so that it falls in line with this conception of harm and benefit.

3.5 CALLICLES AND HIS CONCEPTION OF JUSTICE

Callicles is the most famous of Socrates' three interlocutors in the *Gorgias*, and not without reason. While Gorgias praises the importance of the techne he teaches, and Polus unabashedly envies the simple exercise of power, Callicles offers a philosophy: a conception of the good and happy life and of what a person must be like to achieve it. It is often remarked that Callicles is the "most radical" of the three. I have tried to complicate this assessment by arguing that each of the interlocutors occupies a unique position, which is not straightforwardly "more radical" than that of his predecessor. It is true that Callicles has the most sweeping and well worked out positive position of the three; it is also true that while Polus accepts "conventional" examples of justice and injustice, and the conventional belief that doing injustice is more shameful, Callicles rejects these. In these two respects, Callicles is the more radical interlocutor. We shall see, however, that while Polus shows no appreciation of the value of a state of soul, of being noble or excellent, Callicles has a distinct, if ultimately problematic, conception of excellence. When Callicles rejects the separation of the ideas of the fine and the shameful from the better and the worse he moves himself closer to the Socratic position in this respect than Polus ever is (483a ff.). Callicles

[57] In Vasiliou (2002b) I give an account of how this transition is effected.

describes and develops a superior, excellent character, and although his conception of excellence is clearly "radical" and un-Socratic, the idea itself of excellence of character is not. Polus lacks this concept; he merely praises the goods gained by someone with power, without ever tying that to a particular character-type that he endorses. The problem Callicles faces is that he retains a more ordinary and conventional conception of harm and benefit, quite close to Polus', while (unlike Polus) he takes the achievement of such benefits to be the province of a particular type of superior character. While Polus' enviable person is someone with power – the tyrant or orator – Polus simply presumes that such power follows upon the acquisition of rhetorical skill. Callicles ties the power to achieve benefits to a state of soul, a state which he calls excellence. For Callicles there is a clear notion of excellence of character, measured by a particular state of soul: appetite gratification. Socrates' argument with Callicles raises conflicts between Callicles' praise of what he takes to be an excellent character and his substantive account of the benefits that excellence confers. Socrates attacks him by showing in effect that, if one's goal is an excellence of character, one will need a revised conception of harm and benefit; Callicles cannot have his radical, superior man while retaining his conventional notion of harm and benefit.

Callicles' account of natural justice grows out of criticism of Socrates and his two predecessors. In particular, Callicles derides Polus' admission that doing injustice is more shameful than suffering it. He believes that Polus concedes this only because he is too ashamed to admit to what he actually believes (482d–e). Callicles reserves his most severe blame, however, for Socrates, accusing him of illegitimately switching in argument from what is the case according to nature (φύσις) to what is the case according to law (νόμος)[58] in order to generate a contradiction in his interlocutor's statements: "for nature and law are in many cases opposed to each other" (482e4–5). When his interlocutor speaks "according to nature," Socrates questions him "according to law," and vice versa. While shame does not appear to be a problem for Socrates, Callicles believes that integrity in argument is. He not only claims that this is a general tactic of Socrates, but also charges Socrates with having just employed it against Polus:

[You've engaged in illegitimate switching between law and nature] just now in these [two] cases: both in the case of doing injustice and of suffering it. When Polus spoke about what is more shameful according to law, you pursued the argument according to nature. For, by nature, everything is more shameful which is worse, [namely] suffering injustice, but, by law, doing injustice [is more shameful]. (483a5–8)

[58] νόμος is difficult to capture with a single English word; it can mean law, convention, rule. See Irwin (1979), 171.

Commentators do not try to specify precisely where in the argument Socrates equivocated according to Callicles, but I think it is important to find out, for it will have consequences for how we understand Callicles' entire position as well as Socrates' stance in relation to it.

Polus makes two claims in the argument for the principle about justice: (1) suffering injustice is worse than doing it (474c5–6), and (2) doing injustice is more shameful than suffering it (474c7–8). Socrates then establishes via an induction that (3) anything which is more shameful is either worse or more painful, or both. He then concludes that, since doing injustice is not more painful, it must be worse.[59] At what point does Socrates "pursue the argument according to nature," as Callicles maintains? It cannot be at (2), for (2) is Polus' own concession,[60] and furthermore it is not true by nature, but only by law according to Callicles.[61] Indeed, (2) is most probably the premise that Callicles refers to as Polus' speaking according to law. What about (1)? It too fails to be a plausible candidate because, like (2), it is Polus' contention, not Socrates'; he of course believes the contrary. But more importantly, there is no textual evidence that Callicles ever thinks that the by nature/by law distinction applies to the terms "better" and "worse" or "good" and "bad." This stands in stark contrast with the clear evidence that Callicles sees a difference between the fine/shameful by nature and the fine/shameful by law (483a7–8, 483c6–d2), and between the just/unjust by nature and the just/unjust by law (483c8–d2, 483e2, 484a); he relies on these distinctions to formulate his own position immediately after his criticism of Socrates' argumentation.

What is critical to recognize, however, is that it is central to Callicles' position that what is better and worse, what harms and benefits a person, is a matter, relatively speaking, of "fact" and therefore not susceptible to the by nature/by law contrast. For Callicles (1) is a plain fact, while (2), conceded by Polus, is true by law, although false by nature. What Socrates then "pursues by nature" in order to generate a contradiction must be (3): what is more shameful *by nature* is worse. Callicles agrees of course, while holding that what is more shameful by convention (namely, doing injustice) is in fact better.

Commentators have not recognized that the better/worse distinction is not susceptible to the by nature/by law distinction. If we think more carefully about Callicles' position, however, this should not be surprising. For Callicles, the plain fact that something is worse or more harmful to

[59] See Vasiliou (2002b), §3 for a discussion of this argument.

[60] Even if Callicles is right that he concedes it only because of shame.

[61] Of course, Socrates believes (2) is true without qualification.

a person is what *explains why* it is by nature more shameful for him. The perversion of society, according to Callicles, is that it takes the plain facts of benefit and harm, and considers beneficial actions shameful, instead of noble; such perverted valuations are correct only "by convention." Callicles maintains that, if an action is worse, then by nature it must be more shameful. To disrupt the connection between what is worse and what is truly (by nature) shameful is to pervert the true nature of the noble and the shameful, the just and the unjust. We must recognize that Callicles' normative judgements rest on factual claims, which he takes as obvious, about what harms and benefits a person. For Callicles the facts ground the normative judgements. This is shown in his use of examples from the world of animals and political events. Animals, and human beings unencumbered by "convention," naturally pursue what is in their own interest without regard for what is conventionally called "justice." Heracles is better off with the cattle of Geryon – that is put forward as a fact – and *therefore* it is right and just that he take them (484b–c). The argument throughout proceeds from facts about harm and benefit to conclusions about the just and unjust and fine and shameful by nature. Also, we might note that one cannot harm one's leg by nature as opposed to harming it "by convention"; for Callicles, as for Socrates, what harms and benefits the body and the soul is not susceptible to the by nature/by convention distinction. As we shall see, Callicles goes on to argue that in fact philosophy turns out to harm a person's *character* because it leads to harm for his body and a loss of possessions when a philosopher turns out incapable of defending his body or his property (484c ff.).[62]

Appreciating that the nature/law distinction does not apply to the better/worse distinction is particularly important for understanding Callicles' relationship to SV. Socrates' desired conclusion and the heart of Socratic ethics insofar as it follows from SV – that doing injustice is worse than suffering it – is by Callicles' lights an entirely false conclusion generated by the above equivocation. It is important to emphasize that according to Callicles this claim is not true *either* by nature *or* by law; it is obviously and ridiculously false. When Callicles enters the conversation he is incredulous about what he has heard from Socrates and claims that, if Socrates were correct, then life would be "upside down" (481b–c). In this passage he is not referring simply to a conventional view of justice, for he is thoroughly

[62] Polus is willing, by contrast, to separate what is worse and what is more shameful, and this is what so infuriates Callicles. Polus recognizes the plain fact that doing injustice (with impunity) is better for a person, but does not draw the conclusion that Callicles believes follows: that it is therefore by nature more noble and just.

familiar with that, and will soon both describe it and strenuously criticize it (483b ff.). He is so angry with Socrates in part because he sees him ranting on and on about a ridiculous conclusion that has been generated fallaciously via an equivocation from otherwise true premises – premises that can be seen as true once the appropriate qualifiers are added. I suggest that this is what he means by calling Socrates a "mob orator" (δημηγόρος, 482c5).

We can clarify the difference between Socrates and Callicles by looking more closely at the relationship between what is worse and what is shameful. For Socrates what is worse is identical to what is more shameful and disgraceful. He holds a biconditional: something is worse if and only if it is more disgraceful. At 463d5, he claims that what is worse is more shameful and, at 474c8–d2, he claims that what is more shameful is worse. Callicles agrees, so long as we add the "by nature" tag: what is more shameful by nature is worse. Although this is a true statement according to Callicles, matters are less clear if we put it as a conditional: if something is more shameful (by nature), then it is worse. I submit that this makes no sense on Callicles' view. Something is more shameful by nature *because* it is really worse. The perversion of law is to take what is worse and declare it more noble. There is no way to delimit what is more shameful by nature on Callicles' account independently of what is worse; there is no way then to determine *first* that something is more shameful and to conclude from that that it is worse. Socrates too believes that something is more shameful because it is really worse, only he also believes that there is no way of determining what is really worse without determining what is truly shameful/unjust.

This is the deep difference between Socrates and Callicles. For Socrates what is worse is worse *because* it is truly shameful: what is truly shameful is what harms the soul, and it harms the soul *because* it is truly shameful. On Socrates' account there is no independent handle we can get on what is better or worse that can then ground our conceptions of virtue and vice. What is better is better *because* it benefits our souls, and what benefits our souls is doing virtuous actions, but we have no facts, on a parallel with facts about what benefits our bodies or the state of our possessions, that determine what the virtuous actions are. If something is more shameful, it is, *for that reason*, more harmful, since more shameful actions are the actions that are more harmful to the soul. This is not the way it works for Callicles: the reason something is more shameful (by nature) in the first place is because it is worse, and he takes the determination of whether an action is better or worse to be an obvious matter of fact.

We need to understand this throughout the rest of Socrates' much-maligned discussion with Callicles. Socrates' conception of what is better and worse is deeply and fundamentally opposed to Callicles'; it is a greater difference between them than Callicles' division between "conventional" and "natural" justice. It is not merely that Callicles holds a different conception of virtue than Socrates, it is that he holds a different conception of harm and benefit: this is what is responsible for the distance between them. For Socrates real harm and benefit (i.e. harm and benefit to the soul) cannot in the end be understood independently of virtue and vice. Without an account of virtue, its content remains an object of belief at best. For Callicles we know what real harm is (at bottom, frustration of appetites), and to be subject to such harms is what is shameful by nature and therefore what is truly vicious – vicious by nature. For him the content of real justice is found in the concept of real benefit.[63] Callicles then cashes this out in terms of unrestrained appetite gratification.[64] But we shall see that, once Socrates rebuts unqualified hedonism, we are back with the necessity of explaining the distinction between good and bad pleasures. Since good and bad can no longer be explained by simple appeal to appetite gratification, what makes pleasures good or bad? Unable to reduce the account of harm and benefit to non-evaluative terms, Socrates and his interlocutor are thrown back to the determining question about which actions are virtuous.

3.6 Callicles' protreptic

While Callicles is radical in that he rejects the demands of conventional justice, I have tried to show that his conception of harm and benefit is, like that of Polus, emphatically ordinary. By contrast, while Socrates appears to defend some version of "conventional" justice, the conception of harm he holds is extremely radical. I have argued that Callicles does not apply

[63] As we shall see in chapter five, this is the point at which Thrasymachus' views come quite close to Callicles'. Thrasymachus does not use any concept of natural or real as opposed to conventional justice. All justice is conventional for him in the sense that it is dependent on the laws that are instituted in a society. We shall see that Thrasymachus ends up rejecting thoroughgoing conventionalism, limiting just laws to those that are truly to the advantage of the rulers. In *Republic* 1, Socrates limits his examination of Thrasymachus' view to the question of whether it is true that rulers, on the model of craftsmen, seek their own advantage, or the advantage of their subjects; see 5.2–4. What is not explored there, but left implicit, is what the real advantage of a ruler, or of anyone, consists in. Callicles has an answer to this: unrestrained appetite gratification. Thrasymachus implies the same, when he describes, as he puts it, the complete injustice of the tyrant. We shall see in 6.5 and 8.5 that the question of whether appetite gratification is true benefit is central to the challenge to justice in Book 2 and the subsequent response in the remaining parts of the *Republic*.

[64] See Cooper (1999b) for a clear, convincing account of this.

his *nomos*/nature distinction to harm/benefit or bad/good. What harms or benefits an agent is taken as a matter of fact, from which the conception of what is shameful is derived.

We find further evidence that this interpretation of Callicles' conception of harm and benefit is correct if we consider the next section of his speech, which follows his discussion of natural justice (484c4–486d1). I call this "Callicles' protreptic" because he attempts to persuade Socrates to give up the philosophical life and turn to gaining experience of the sorts of things that a "fine and good and well-regarded" (καλὸν κἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐδόκιμον) man does (484d1–2).

> For [those men doing philosophy] end up inexperienced in the laws [τῶν νόμων ἄπειροι γίγνονται] of the city, in the words one must use to speak with people in contracts, both in private and in public, and in human pleasures *and* desires [καὶ τῶν ἡδονῶν τε καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν τῶν ἀνθρωπείων], and, in short, they are inexperienced in human customs [τῶν ἠθῶν] in absolutely every respect (παντάπασιν). (484d2–7)

The similarity between Gorgias' craft and Callicles' conception of the good life becomes clear here.[65] Studying philosophy for too long leaves one unacquainted with how to get along in the world and how to acquire power. Plato appears to have some fun here. Callicles, who has just finished his account of the naturally superior person as one who smashes ordinary convention, claims that philosophizing into adulthood is bad because it leaves one ignorant of *ordinary conventions and customs*, which are necessary to learn if one wants to obtain real power. Presumably the naturally superior person, having learned all of these "laws" and ways of speaking, will then use his knowledge to "have more" than others and rule over them. After the detailed description of the superior person as smashing convention, it is striking that Callicles then criticizes the philosopher for not being adequately experienced in conventional matters, and so for being "out of touch" with the society that Callicles has just roundly criticized. The philosopher, willfully ignorant of all such matters, appears by contrast to show himself to be superior to and more distant from convention in a way that Callicles' admired man, who must learn and have experience with all ordinary conventions and desires, does not. From the perspective of the outer frame, we might conclude that Plato asks his reader to think about who is the real radical and who the slave to convention.

[65] Callicles criticizes Socrates for not knowing about what is "reasonable" (εἰκός) and "probable" (πιθανόν) (486a1–2): two key concepts in rhetoric. Socrates' philosophy fails to fit "reasonable expectations" and so fails to be persuasive; instead it provokes alienation and perplexity. See also Vasiliou (2002a).

Callicles urges further that philosophy is appropriate for a young boy but not a grown man. Given that philosophy leaves one unable to defend oneself against harm, conceived in the ordinary way, someone who studies philosophy is worse off in being defenseless against harm. Therefore, according to Callicles' maxim from 483a7–8, one is in a more shameful state, since everything which is worse is by nature more shameful. Callicles warns that any wretch could come along, accuse Socrates on false charges, and have him executed, and he would be unable to defend himself (486a–b). He makes clear that harm comes in the form of a threat to one's body by trial and execution, and by being punched in the face without recourse (486c2), and also of being deprived of one's possessions so as to live "without honor" in the city (486c1–2). He concludes that Socrates ought to envy those who have "life and glory and many other good things" (βίος καὶ δόξα καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ἀγαθά, 486d1).

These passages show Callicles' clear recognition of external goods. It should come as little surprise, then, that Socrates will question his account of natural justice by asking who exactly the superior person who should have more *is*, and what exactly "having more" means. But while Polus had divorced his concept of doing better from any notion of virtue, Callicles attempts to connect them. What justice by nature is is for the superior person to have more. In order to have more, and, especially, in order to avoid having your face punched in, being dragged into court, having your property taken away, and, ultimately, being executed if someone wants it – that is, to avoid being powerless with respect to goods of the body and one's possessions[66] – one must learn the conventions and ways of speaking proper to the city, i.e., one must learn rhetoric. While this much of Callicles' account is familiar from Gorgias' barely restrained admiration for the power of rhetoric and Polus' unabashed obsession with it in the face of his idea of what is virtuous, Callicles' uniqueness consists in part in connecting these ideas to the condition of one's soul. To be the victim of physical harm and to be deprived of property, things which are obviously bad, is to suffer actions that are by nature shameful to suffer. If one is in such a truly shameful position, it must be the result of a failure of one's soul – it is not as it should be. Callicles argues that Socrates, by engaging in the wrong sort of activity (philosophy) for too long, has warped his soul, and so fails to have a good, noble, and wise soul.[67]

[66] And so, once hedonism is on the table, suffer the complete frustration of one's appetites.

[67] Cooper (1999b), 54, n. 39 says that Callicles' criticism of adults who philosophize as being "unmanly" and in need of a beating "suggests that [Callicles] does regard philosophers like Socrates as intelligent, but defective in spirit and manly bravery (and culpably so)." Cooper connects this criticism with

We can understand Callicles' protreptic as a speech on behalf of a sort of SV. We have already seen that he begins his speech by urging Socrates to give up philosophy on the ground of desiring to be "fine and good" (484d1–2).[68] Callicles entirely agrees that anyone who fails to philosophize while young "will never expect anything fine or noble [οὔτε καλοῦ οὔτε γενναίου] from himself" (485c7–d1). Moreover, he connects lack of proper concern with the corruption of one's soul, and so with acting shamefully:

> Socrates, you are careless of what you should care for [ἀμελεῖς . . . ὧν δεῖ σε ἐπιμελεῖσθαι]; you twist this noble [γενναίαν] nature of your soul into some childish shape . . . Doesn't it seem to you to be shameful [αἰσχρόν] to be the way I think you are, you and those others who always go further along in philosophy? (485e6–486a1 . . . 486a5)

These passages show Callicles' explicit concern for the development of a particular state of soul. While the dramatic tension caused by the clear foreshadowing of Socrates' eventual trial and execution has been well noted, there are also striking, specific, parallels in speech between what Socrates says in the *Apology* and what Callicles says here, which pulls the relationship between the *Gorgias* and the *Apology*, and between Socrates and Callicles, even closer. Callicles' remarks are clear echoes, with a different twist, of Socrates' words in the *Apology* when he recounts what he says is his usual reproach against and exhortation of his fellow citizens:

> Excellent friend, I shall say, you are an Athenian. Your city is the most important and renowned for its wisdom and power; so are you not ashamed [οὐκ αἰσχύνῃ] that, while you take care [ἐπιμελούμενος] to acquire as much wealth as possible, with glory and honor as well, yet you take no care [οὐκ ἐπιμελῇ] nor give thought to truth, or to the best possible state of your soul? . . . all I do is to go about persuading you, young and old alike, not to care for [ἐπιμελεῖσθαι] your bodies or for your wealth so intensely as for the greatest possible well-being of your souls. It is not from wealth, I tell you, that virtue arises; rather it is from virtue that wealth, and all other good things, come about for human beings in their private and public life. (29d7–30b4)

We see that Socrates' and Callicles' speeches are very similar in tone, and in the concepts to which they appeal, most notably what one ought to

Callicles' praise of the individual who does not slacken "on account of softness of soul" (491b4). If the reading of Callicles' position that I defend is correct, however, the criticism he levies against Socrates is not simply that he is unmanly or soft in pursuit of his ends, but that he *has the wrong ends*. Aiming at a life of philosophy is not only unmanly, it is also *unintelligent* because it is, by Callicles' lights, so obviously wrong. As Callicles says in his "protreptic speech," how can it be "wise" (σοφόν) to lead a life where some idiot can put you to death if he wanted to (486b)? Pursuing philosophy into adulthood is both unmanly *and* unintelligent.

[68] Echoing Socrates' own use earlier at 470e9, as Dodds (1959) notes.

care for (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι and cognates), and how one should avoid shame, and strive for excellence. In a way, Callicles can agree with this quote from Socrates. It is from a certain noble, virtuous state of soul that the power arises that leads to all the other benefits for human beings. The most important difference between Socrates and Callicles centers on the notion of what they take to be better or worse, what they take to be a harm or benefit. Callicles argues for the supremacy of virtue, as Socrates does; but with his conventional notion of harm and benefit, virtue can only be conceived of as valuable as a means of acquiring benefits for the body, increased possessions, good reputation, and the like. Once Callicles' hedonism is presented, the explanation of the value of these goods will be in terms of the only thing that has value in itself, and this will turn out to be a good for the soul, but of a very particular type: appetite gratification. As becomes apparent, being excellent for Callicles is being powerful enough to benefit one's appetites and to satisfy their needs. This is the only sort of benefit and harm that he recognizes. When Callicles says that the superior person is the person who is wise and brave about the affairs of the city (491b), he cashes out being better in terms of states of soul: wisdom and bravery. This is especially clear when he emphasizes that his superior person does not slacken from achieving his goals "on account of a softness of soul" (διὰ μαλακίαν τῆς ψυχῆς, 491b4). For Callicles the superiority of the person is not his possession of material goods or his physical strength[69] but a certain excellent state of soul that does not suffer from "softness." It is important to appreciate how close, by contrast with Polus, this is to Socrates' position. Polus displays no interest in or even understanding of the intrinsic value of certain qualities of character.

Callicles then shows himself to be the person referred to explicitly in the *Apology*, when Socrates poses his rhetorical question:

> Perhaps someone might say: "Aren't you ashamed that you have pursued the sort of pursuit on account of which you are now likely to be put to death?" (*Ap.* 28b3–5)

As we saw in chapter one, this question is what prompts Socrates' first statement of SV. Who is this person who might say such things? We can see that the speaker whom Socrates, we might now say, "recalls" is Callicles:

> You'd go into court, to face some inferior wretch of an accuser, and you'd be put to death if he wanted the death penalty for you. Now how can this be wise, Socrates? (*Gor.* 486b2–4)

[69] Although his examples of Heracles and Xerxes might reasonably lead one to think that, as Socrates initially exploits (489d).

It is important for understanding the nature of the relationship between Socrates and Callicles to see that they argue for SV in critically different ways. Callicles presents his conception of "natural" justice *first*, and then argues, on the basis of the obvious fact that natural justice clearly benefits the agent, that acting otherwise is shameful. So Callicles argues first for a conception of what virtue is, and only then for SV. Socrates, as we have seen, maintains SV even without knowing what virtue is. Callicles sandwiches his "protreptic" as I have called it (his appeal to SV) between his account of natural justice and his statement of hedonism. And we have seen how and why each can argue the way he does. Given that Callicles takes benefit and harm to be matters of obvious fact, he then "radically" argues that real virtues are states of soul that confer these benefits. As I have explained, the reason that the real, "by nature," virtues are the ones they are is justified by the fact that they provide benefit to the agent. Given Socrates' views, no such course of argument is available to him. As we have seen, what is central to SV, and to its defense, is the idea of the soul as an independent locus of harm and benefit. Once a person has granted this, and granted that the soul and its welfare are superior in importance to the welfare of the body or of one's possessions, then it is an open question what benefit and harm even *are*. Socrates cannot, like Callicles, rely on the notions of bodily harm and benefit, except, as he does repeatedly, by analogy. Nor, given his rejection of hedonism, can he rely on appetite gratification as such. Socrates cannot answer the question of what harms and benefits the soul without determining what virtue is. And as we saw in chapter one, even in the *Gorgias* he denies knowing "how these things are" (509a): he knows that they are most important (i.e. he knows SV), but how to determine the actions that *are* virtuous continues to elude him.

That this is the heart of the matter becomes clear in Socrates' discussion of Callicles' position. After all, Callicles is in a sense not so far from Socrates, nor, in a sense, is Socrates so far from Callicles. That the better man should in some sense have more than the worse is not necessarily something Socrates would reject. In some respects this would be an odd way to put it: for, according to Socrates, the better man – the man who is more virtuous – will have his soul, the most valuable part of himself, in a better state than the less virtuous person. So Socrates does not simply disagree with Callicles: he is drawing Callicles' conventional conception of harm and benefit into the open. Socrates attacks Callicles' definition of justice – that the better, superior, stronger person[70] should have more than and rule over others

[70] For the differences between these terms see Irwin (1979), 184–5.

(484c, 488b) – from two directions. First he examines what Callicles means by "superior/better/stronger person" (488c–490b), and then he examines what to "have more than others" means (490b–491d). Interestingly, that the better (in some sense of "better") man should rule over others is never questioned. Indeed, Socrates believes it: in the *Apology* (28d, 29b) he says that a person should never disobey his superior. If someone is my superior in the sense that matters for Socrates – i.e., if someone knows what virtue is when I do not – then, given SV, I should obey that person.[71]

Socrates has been criticized for being especially annoying and for deliberately misunderstanding Callicles throughout this section of text.[72] But I don't think that is true. Callicles has a vague elitist notion of superiority and of "having more," but Socrates wants to know what the goods are that the superior person has that make him superior and what the goods are that his superiority entitles him to more of. When Socrates goes, irritatingly, through examples of being physically stronger, or possessing more shoes or bigger shoes, or more food and drink, Callicles gets annoyed, but the question is serious and points to the real difference between Socrates and Callicles. Is there – or is there not – an excellence of soul that is intrinsically valuable and whose value is not able to be cashed out in terms of physical, bodily benefits, material gains, or other external goods that yield appetite satisfaction?

3.7 CALLICLES' HEDONISM

Once Callicles presents his hedonism it becomes even clearer that he believes that virtue and happiness reside in the soul. Happiness and virtue consist in making the appetites as large as possible and having the ability to fulfill them. Here Callicles takes a step closer to Socrates. By specifying the goal of life to be appetite gratification, he moves the supreme aim of life to a state of soul, rather than the obtaining of any bodily condition or physical possession. External goods are goods, it turns out, only insofar as they serve appetite gratification; that is, their value is dependent on a state of soul. What Callicles does with his unrestricted hedonism is enable himself to hang on to an account of harm and benefit that does not use evaluative terms. If appetite gratification simply as such is the aim, then there is no further determination about virtue to make. The appetites are simply there, and an excellent man takes care not to restrain them: he lets them

[71] This view will be endorsed and elaborated in the *Republic*, where Socrates argues that the philosopher-king ought to rule over everyone else. See chapters seven and eight.

[72] See Beversluis (2000), ch. 16, esp. 345–9.

grow (presumably in whatever way they grow, towards whatever ends) and then has the power and strength of soul to fulfill them (492d–e). Both the desires and the capacity to fulfill them reside in the soul. Callicles' language is striking. He begins his speech advocating hedonism with a rhetorical question: "How can a person be happy if he is a slave to anything whatsoever?" (491e5–6). As before, when Callicles spoke of the necessity for the person who would smash convention to know human conventions well (484d), here too he immediately follows with an account of what is fine and just by nature, and what constitutes living "rightly" (ὀρθῶς): letting the appetites grow as large as possible and then being "capable of serving [the desires] on account of one's courage and wisdom" (ἱκανὸν εἶναι ὑπηρετεῖν δι᾽ ἀνδρείαν καὶ φρόνησιν, 492a1–2). He recognizes no tension here between his claim that the truly happy person is a slave to nothing and his claim that the truly happy person is capable of "serving" his desires. Callicles here identifies a person with his appetite. The strong, virtuous person consists of large desires and an adequate capacity to fulfill them, and both of these are features of his soul.

Thus, I am largely in agreement with John Cooper's account of Callicles' hedonism.[73] Callicles believes that a person who lives his life properly allows his appetites to grow as large and as intense as possible, and must then have the intelligence and strength of character (bravery) to fulfill them.[74] Cooper writes: "Callicles continues to recommend as the best life for a human being the life led by a skilled and powerful orator – a naturally superior, intelligent, capable person – who allows his appetites to grow to their greatest extent and is not squeamish or cowardly but brave and manly in using any means necessary to fulfill whatever desire he might be feeling, without regard to the conventional morality or immorality of those means."[75] We might add to this as Cooper agrees: without regard to the conventional morality or immorality of *the ends* either, that is, the desires that one wants to fulfill. Cooper concludes that according to Callicles "the fulfillment and gratification of appetites is good, simply as such, and nothing else at all is good in that way, i.e., simply because of what it *is*."[76]

Faced with Callicles' unrestricted hedonism, Socrates draws out the unpalatable consequences of such a position by asking whether satisfying

[73] Cooper (1999b), 51–7.

[74] Cooper shows that the second aspect of Callicles' account entails that he recognizes the possibility of a sort of weakness of will, in which a person restrains himself and prevents the gratification of some appetite either because of a misguided sense of shame or because of a lack of bravery causing him to be intimidated by the conventional values of society.

[75] Cooper (1999b), 52. [76] Cooper (1999b), 55 (his emphasis).

absolutely *any* desire a person might find pleasurable is the same as living happily. Once Socrates introduces the example of the desire of the catamite, Callicles asks how Socrates could not be ashamed to lead the discussion to such a case (494e7–8). Socrates, blaming Callicles for where the argument has gone, presses him again to say whether he thinks the same thing is pleasant and good without qualification or whether there are some pleasant things which are in fact not good. This leads to the following interchange:

CALLICLES: Well, so that I do not have an inconsistent argument, if I say that they are different, I say that they are the same.
SOCRATES: You are destroying the previous statements, and you would no longer be properly investigating with me things that are [true] [τὰ ὄντα], if you speak contrary to what you think.
CALLICLES: You do it too.
SOCRATES: Then neither am I acting correctly [ὀρθῶς], if indeed I do this, nor are you. But come, blessed man, once and for all, enjoying in any and every way [παντῶς] is not the good, for both the many shameful things we just hinted at follow, and, if this is so, also many others.
CALLICLES: So you suppose, Socrates.
SOCRATES: Do you really [τῷ ὄντι] insist on these things, Callicles?
CALLICLES: I do.
SOCRATES: Should we proceed with the argument then as though you were serious?
CALLICLES: Absolutely.

(495a5–c2)

There is controversy over how this passage should be understood. Charles Kahn offers the following remarks:

[By moving to the case of the catamite] Socrates finally drives Callicles to shame. He thus openly repeats the manoeuver which succeeded against Gorgias and Polus (as he himself points out at 494d2–4). Callicles does not have the boldness (*tolman*) to say that *kinaidoi* are fortunate and happy, if only their needs are fully satisfied (494e5); but he refuses to call such pleasures bad or shameful in order to avoid contradicting himself.[77]

Kahn is correct to see shame at work here, but is it working in the way he says? Why is Callicles hesitant to say (at least initially) that the catamite's life is a happy one? Kahn claims that Socrates "repeats the manoeuver which succeeded against Gorgias and Polus," each of whom claims that the preceding interlocutor was ashamed to say what he really believed. Kahn goes on to explain the social and political ramifications of being a catamite,

[77] Kahn (1983), 105–6.

and concludes that "this is one type of desire and gratification that Callicles' ambitious young man cannot afford to cultivate."[78] He points out that being a catamite legally deprives a person of his citizenship rights and so conflicts with Callicles' ambition to political rule. Kahn is absolutely correct, but Callicles is not seeking rule of the polis as it stands. The person whom Callicles describes as superior by nature is going to be the one who throws out the false, merely conventional, laws and rules in favor of values that are true by nature (484a ff.). The same city which condemns the catamite also condemns the superior man's natural right, on Callicles' account, to "having more than one's fair share" (πλεονεξία). So the mere fact that being a catamite leaves one politically disenfranchised in the current democratic system should not be relevant to Callicles.[79]

Rather, Callicles rejects the life of the catamite because he himself really believes that it is shameful and bad. He has championed the notion of the naturally superior person, who would "have more" and rule over others; he contrasts this with the shameful adult philosopher whispering in the corner with a few boys, whom he derides (483d–484c, 485a–e). It is ludicrous to think that Callicles might accept that his "superman," smashing the bonds of convention, might be a catamite. Kahn is correct to think that Callicles himself really believes that the life of a catamite is the very opposite of the life of his superman. Instead of "ruling over" others, the catamite is continually in the passive position of "being ruled over."[80] But if this is the case then the shame that Callicles experiences at this point in the argument is not the shame to admit what he really believes (that is the shame he attributes to Gorgias and Polus) but the shame to agree to what he believes to be *false*.

Why does Callicles do this? It is no doubt correct, as Cooper argues, that Callicles concedes the point about the catamite in order to maintain his philosophical position: that pleasure is without qualification the good.[81] But there is, I think, an additional motivation behind Callicles' apparent love of consistency: the fear of suffering another kind of shame – the shame of being refuted by Socrates, and in front of many others no less. A central feature of Callicles' notion of the superior person is the idea of winning

[78] Kahn (1983), 107.

[79] For more on the political resonance of Callicles' position see Ober (1998), 204–6.

[80] Moreover, the example, following Callicles' own line of argument (491e ff.), envisions someone who is insatiable (494b–d).

[81] Cooper (1999b), 69, n. 60 insists, against Kahn (1983), that Callicles does in fact agree, albeit reluctantly, that the catamite's life *is* a happy one at this point in order to preserve the consistency of his position.

and ruling. Part of his criticism of Gorgias and Polus is not only that they do not admit to their actual, non-conventional, beliefs, as Callicles thinks, but also that they lose to Socrates in argument. Callicles does not want the same thing to happen to him. At this point in the dialogue Socrates has already caused Callicles to amend his position a couple of times in the course of explaining what he means by "superior by nature," during which he reveals his aristocratic bent.[82] Callicles, who thinks of himself as to some degree a superior type, is now in danger of having his hedonism refuted, and so of being bested by Socrates in the argument. At 495a5–6, he explicitly states that he will say that a catamite's life is a happy one "in order to keep his argument from being inconsistent." This naturally leads Socrates (and the reader) to be suspicious that Callicles is now responding *contrary* to what he really believes. When Socrates warns him that they will not be able to pursue the truth if he answers contrary to what he believes, Callicles responds, "You do it too, Socrates" (495b1). This is a clear admission of guilt; in agreeing to keep his argument consistent he *is* in fact speaking contrary to what he believes. When you tell your child not to eat cookies before dinner, and he responds, "You do it too," he admits guilt.[83] Thus the fear of the "shame" of being bested by Socrates in argument overcomes the shame of admitting something contrary to his own beliefs. Callicles swallows a consequence that he does not believe because he would rather make a claim that he believes false and shameful (that the catamite's life is a happy one) than be inconsistent and lose an argument, particularly to Socrates – a character whom he has described as unmanly and in need of a beating. By 499b, after two arguments against his unrestrained hedonism, Callicles has no way of avoiding refutation, except by claiming that he was joking all along (499b4–8).[84] And this is, after all, in a sense true; he *was* joking – not saying what he really believed – when he said that a catamite's life is, if pleasant, happy, but he had hoped that this "joke" would save him from the shame of being refuted.

[82] For example, when he expresses contempt for the idea that, since two of his slaves are stronger than he, that means that they are superior to him (489d–e). This is also more evidence that Callicles would never believe that a catamite is happy (and, as he is forced to admit, *just as happy* as his natural superman).

[83] In fact Irwin, (1979) translates 495b1 as: "Of course I do; and you do it too, Socrates," although there is nothing explicit in the Greek corresponding to "I do."

[84] Although I cannot consider this in detail here, I think that this casts some doubt on how serious the preceding arguments against hedonism actually were. See Santas (1979), 266 ff.; Irwin (1979), ad loc.; Rudebusch (1999), ch. 5. In *Republic* 6 (505c), there is a quick refutation of a hedonist on the basis of the fact that he would have to recognize good and bad pleasures, which is just what Callicles ends up saying when he describes himself as joking.

3.8 SOCRATES AS RHETOR

Once Callicles claims that his endorsement of hedonism was only "a joke" and that neither he "nor any other man whatsoever" would deny that some pleasures are better and others worse (499b4–8), Socrates proceeds to argue for SV. Given that pleasure is distinct from the good, Socrates declares that we need some "expert" (τεχνικός) to determine which of the pleasant things are good and which bad (500a4–6), and the same for painful things (499e1–2). He then recalls the discussion he had with Polus and Gorgias in which he distinguished "crafts" (τέχναι) from "knacks" (ἐμπειρίαι) (462b–466a). I need to emphasize here something I mentioned only briefly above (3.2). Socrates' criticism of rhetoric as it is practiced and applauded by his interlocutors is twofold, and is not captured simply by saying that he thinks it is a "knack" rather than a "craft." While this is true, that is only one part of the criticism: as a "knack" it simply guesses at its end by memory and habit, without knowledge of it or any understanding of its causes; and Socrates denies that any such "unreasoning" practice could be called a "craft" (465a2–6; 501a4–b1). But this, although interesting and important, is not the harshest part of his criticism: rhetoric is not only a "knack" but it is "flattery" or "grubbing" (κολακεία). We recall that this is what made Socrates hesitate to say what he thought of rhetoric to Gorgias' face. What makes it flattery is that it aims at pleasure rather than the good. So Socrates has two criticisms: rhetoric as it is practiced has (1) the wrong aim, appetite gratification or pleasure, rather than the good; and (2) it goes about it "unscientifically." These line up with the aiming/determining distinction. What makes an expert an expert is not his knowledge of the *end* of his craft, but his knowledge of how to achieve the end reliably and successfully; it is in this latter task that expertise consists. The craft at which a person is an expert, as it were, fixes its own end. Everyone knows that the craft of cobbling aims to produce shoes, but only the expert cobbler knows how to produce them (well) (see 4.4). The expert true rhetor, qua expert, will be able to furnish examples of the people whom he has made better and more virtuous (514a–515b; cf. *La*. 185e–186b, *Rep*. 10, 599b–600e). His ability to do this regularly and reliably will be due to his possession of a body of knowledge (a craft), and not simply to haphazard guess work. He will understand the nature and causes of his subject matter. But we need to recognize that this does not help fix the end. What possession of the craft of true rhetoric would provide would be the answer to determining questions: the true rhetorician knows what "to say and to do," what needs to be given

and what withheld in order to make the citizens truly excellent (504d7–9).[85] In other words, he knows what virtue is. This is a function of his possession of the craft. But this rhetor is not simply a craftsman, he is also good – that is, he is not engaging in "flattery," the definition of which is to aim at the pleasant without regard for what is best; it is this disregard of what is best that makes flattery "disgraceful" (465a1–2; 501b–c, 502e; 513d7–8). Socrates is careful to describe the true rhetor as the one who is "*both* expert *and* good" (ὁ τεχνικός τε καὶ ἀγαθός, 504d5–6).[86] What makes him good is the correctness of his aim. Looking always towards virtue, he then uses his expertise, which consists of the knowledge of how to effect it in the world.

By the end of the dialogue we have a Socrates who has offered parables (leaky jar, torrent bird), argument, and finally a *logos/muthos* in an attempt to persuade his interlocutors of SV. The only one of the three to agree, at least verbally, to SV is Gorgias. It is Gorgias alone who speaks during the others' "episodes," and it seems that it is only his prompting that keeps the dialogue from ending some thirty Stephanus pages before it does. Polus, although recognizing ordinary examples of virtuous action, does not consider virtue supreme; in fact, in his view, one is often clearly better off acting contrary to it. Polus shows himself not to understand the idea that the soul itself is a locus for harm and benefit. Without that idea, spelled out early on by Socrates, one cannot understand, let alone agree with, SV. Callicles, like Gorgias, appreciates that there are better and worse states of soul as such, and in this respect differs greatly from Polus and has something significant in common with Socrates. Since, however, what he recognizes as having intrinsic value is simply appetite gratification as such, his conception of virtue is radically subjective, while his conception of harm and benefit is entirely ordinary. Even if Callicles explains the harm in being punched in the face not, at bottom, in terms of the physical injury done, but in terms of appetite gratification thwarted, and so in terms of a state of soul, insofar as appetite gratification is the only good in itself, the substance of his conception of harm and benefit ends up matching Polus'. The "advantage" of Callicles' position, however, is that, since the

[85] This is what the philosopher-kings in the *Republic* will do; see 8.4.

[86] Irwin (1979) translates as though these adjectives are in apposition: "that rhetor, the craftsman, the good one." This suggests that what makes this rhetor good is possession of the craft. Zeyl in Cooper (1997) has "skilled and good"; but the Greek with the τε . . . καὶ construction is emphatic. On my account what makes him good is that he is "looking towards these things [justice and temperance]" always when he acts (504d5, 9), while his possession of his craft enables him to determine what to say and do, what to give and withhold, in order to mold citizens with appropriate characters. In other words, committed to SV, such an expert rhetor will also know how to determine what virtue is: which actions and activities will, according to the habituation principle that will figure so largely in the rest of this dialogue, generate truly virtuous citizens.

ultimate aim, which Callicles is happy to call virtue, is appetite gratification, determining what virtue is can be done relatively simply by looking at what one has appetite for. Unsurprisingly, Socrates is vague about the content of virtue throughout his speech. He describes virtue simply as the order and structure that are truly good for the soul; determining which actions are virtuous remains problematic. If one rejects appetite gratification as a way of determining what virtue is, that is, rejects hedonism, as Socrates does, then which actions are virtuous is conceptually distinct from which actions gratify one's appetite.

From 511b to 513c, Socrates elaborates on what he agreed to in two lines in the *Crito* (48b): what is most important is not living, but living well. If it were best simply to live longest, then any of the many crafts which helped us to survive could claim to be the most important; the question is rather how it is best to live (512e). Thus supremacy of survival is rejected. Socrates then has rejected both survival and pleasure as constituting supreme aims. Once the good is distinct from pleasure and survival, however, the nature of what makes the condition of the soul excellent – namely, the truly excellent actions – becomes a mystery once again. There is no non-evaluative way of determining what is good such as simply by looking at what one has appetite for or at what will keep one alive; thus Socrates is thrown back to the determining question about what one *ought* to have an appetite for and when one *ought* to risk one's life. Although confident that SV is right and that thinking of virtue as appetite gratification is wrong, Socrates claims as always that "he does not know how these things are" (508e–509a; cf. 1.3.2). The dialogue closes, as we saw at the beginning of the chapter, with Socrates' plea to the others, and to Callicles in particular, to join him in his commitment to pursue virtue, practice it, and try to understand it better; in other words, to commit to SV. Although he does not know how to determine which actions *are* virtuous, he knows that aiming at virtue is of supreme importance, and, further, that virtue as a state of soul has some order and structure.[87]

If I am right that there are two things wrong with rhetoric, its aim and its haphazardness, why is there so much emphasis on the existence of the expert? In a way that parallels the argument in the *Republic*,[88] Socrates emphasizes and articulates the habituation principle repeatedly in the final sections of the dialogue. What is "good for the soul" is doing the right things and being restrained from doing the wrong things (505b). While

[87] *Republic* 4 will provide considerably more details about how that order and structure work; see 8.1–2.
[88] See 7.2–3 and 8.1.

the virtuous man will of course do virtuous things (507b), it is clear that he becomes this way by "practicing" virtue (507d1, 509e2, 527b5). Socrates' myth, or, as he insists, account (λόγος), at the end of the dialogue is a vivid illustration of the habituation principle. When people are "stripped" of their bodies their souls will carry all the "marks" of their practices and each of their actions (πράξεις) will be stained into their souls (524d6, 525a1–2). This is a vivid and powerful image Socrates has brought to the defense of SV. It shows that the soul is a distinct locus of harm and benefit from the body and that a virtuous, unscarred soul is generated by engaging in virtuous actions. The myth and the account preceding this image make clear that the true rhetor, having expert knowledge of how to make the citizens excellent, will prescribe and proscribe the appropriate types of actions and activities that actually make citizens excellent. What these are, Socrates does not know – his position is always the same about that: he denies knowledge of how to determine which actions are virtuous. What the end of the *Gorgias* does make urgent is that this determining question must be settled. We cannot become virtuous, not even if we, like Cleitophon, are convinced by Socrates that we ought to be, without the ability to determine correctly which actions are the virtuous ones, that is, which actions will generate a healthy, pure soul when it appears before the judges after death. In chapter four we shall see that the dialogues of definition attempt to answer this very question, but end in failure. In chapters five through eight we shall see that the *Republic* takes up both aiming and determining questions together and develops an account that is more detailed, but still consistent with what we have seen in "earlier" dialogues such as the *Gorgias*.

CHAPTER 4

Trying (and failing) to determine what virtue is

This chapter treats five dialogues, all of which attempt to answer determining questions about what virtuous actions are in general as opposed to what the virtuous action is in the here and now. Three of these – the *Laches*, *Charmides*, and *Euthyphro* – are so-called "dialogues of definition" in which Socrates asks a specific "What is F?" question, where F is a specific virtue: courage, temperance, and piety, respectively. The other two, the *Protagoras* and *Euthydemus*, do not present a "What is F?" question so starkly, although I shall argue that they too attempt to determine what virtue in general is. It is to be expected that Socrates turns to the question of what virtue is, given that he is committed to, argues for, and claims to know SV. It should also come as no surprise that these dialogues contain the majority of Socrates' disavowals of knowledge, and that, consistently with such disavowals and with Cleitophon's criticism of Socrates, these dialogues never succeed in successfully answering the question for virtue in general or for any particular virtue. The *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Gorgias*, by contrast, do not end in aporia – typically considered one of the hallmarks of "early" or "Socratic" dialogues – because they are primarily concerned with SV and/or determining what the virtuous action is in the here and now.

I proceed in this chapter as follows. I begin with a brief general discussion of these five dialogues, highlighting two of their common features (4.1). Next I consider how the alleged answer that Socrates endorses, particularly in the dialogues of definition – namely, that virtue is knowledge, or, more precisely, knowledge of goods and evils – fits with my claim that the point of the "What is F?" question is to attempt to settle determining questions (4.2). Finally I examine parts of the *Euthyphro* (4.3) and then of the *Euthydemus* and *Protagoras* (4.4) to show how Plato emphasizes and exploits the aiming/determining distinction in different ways and gives it a centrally important role to play. We shall see that the failure of these dialogues to achieve an adequate answer to the determining question of which actions are virtuous, together with their suggestion that *being* a virtuous person

consists at least partly (and perhaps wholly) in knowledge, sets the stage for the complex discussion of the *Republic*.[1]

4.1 TWO COMMONALITIES

First, all of the interlocutors in these dialogues, unlike the interlocutors in the *Gorgias*, are committed to, and never question, the supremacy of virtue, at least not within the dialogues themselves. No one ever suggests that some other goal ought to be put ahead of virtue, even if we may be suspicious of the motives of some of the interlocutors. For Protagoras, who is in the business of teaching virtue, SV confirms that he sells the most valuable of wares. Critias and Charmides both endorse the value of being temperate (*Ch.* 157d, 159c).[2] The avowed project of the *Laches* is how to make the boys "best" (ἄριστοι, 179d7). Euthyphro's zealous prosecution of his father is based entirely on his conviction that he knows that what he is doing is pious and right (4b, 4e). In the *Euthydemus*, Dionysodorus and Euthydemus boast that they are no longer interested in war and fighting with armor, which they now consider diversions (πάρεργα), but are the best teachers of virtue (273d8–9). SV, then, forms the background to the discussion in these five dialogues; the supreme importance of virtue is never questioned or doubted.

Second, in these dialogues the investigation into virtue is prompted without fail by a concrete practical problem in the here and now. In the *Charmides*, Socrates needs to determine whether Charmides is temperate before he can properly administer the "drug" for his headache (158e). The pretext at least is that they must test whether Charmides has temperance before the medicine can be effectively administered (158e–159a). The test of Charmides' temperance is an ability to answer the "What is F?" question. As we shall see below, Euthyphro is prosecuting his father for murder. He declares that his action is pious and right, and that those who are criticizing him are wrong, because they are wrong about the nature of piety (4b ff., 5d–e). In order to confirm that Euthyphro's action is in fact pious and right, Socrates turns to definition. In the *Laches*, Lysimachus and Melesias are trying to discover how best to educate their sons. But the dialogue

[1] The topic of chapters five through eight.

[2] We may well suspect some disingenuousness on their part. Given the historical fates of the characters as members of the Thirty, which any reader would know, matters are more sinister than they first appear. Even in the dialogue Charmides is sly, and ends by saying that he will take what he wants, by force if necessary (176c–d). My point here is simply that, unlike Polus or Callicles (or Thrasymachus, as we shall see in chapter five), none of these interlocutors ever disputes at least a verbal commitment to virtue as the supreme aim of action.

begins with a much more concrete question. Lysimachus and Melesias have taken Laches and Nicias to see a particular man give a display of fighting in armor (178a, 179e). Lysimachus wants to know whether this sort of instruction is necessary for the boys' proper upbringing and whether the person whose display they have just witnessed is the appropriate person to teach it. By 185e, Socrates has established that the real topic of conversation is how to care for the souls of the boys, and suggests that the key would lie in finding an expert at this sort of task. In the *Protagoras* Hippocrates wakes Socrates before dawn in a rush to bankrupt himself and his friends by becoming the pupil of Protagoras (310e). Socrates, in a preliminary discussion, warns Hippocrates to proceed carefully before entrusting his soul to a sophist about whom, as he admits, he does not even know what he professes to teach (312e). Once again the many arguments about virtue stem from a prior, concrete, problem about what Hippocrates should do. Finally, in the *Euthydemus* there is a contest between Socrates, on the one hand, and Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, on the other, over who can persuade the young Cleinias to devote himself to wisdom and virtue.

All five dialogues, then, confront a practical issue that demands resolution in the here and now of the dialogue. In keeping with their aporetic conclusions, we never find out how any of these practical questions are resolved. What does Euthyphro decide to do in light of his discussion with Socrates? After witnessing such a spectacle, does Hippocrates enroll with Protagoras? Since the answer to what virtue (or some particular virtue) is is never found, the practical question is left hanging, unanswerable in a rational, knowing way. For if we do not know what piety is, how can we know whether this action here and now is pious? I do not mean to suggest that these dialogues are really mostly about solving these practical problems; the practical problems are clearly the pretexts for the investigations into the nature of virtue that follow. It is important, however, to recognize that Socrates and his interlocutors seek to discover what virtue is in general so that they may determine what the virtuous action is in their particular situation. If we hold SV, and believe that we must know what the virtuous action *is* before we can do it (that is, that knowledge is necessary for virtue), then we will need some way of determining what the virtuous action is. The dialogues of definition, at least, pursue a clear method, which aims to yield a simple practical syllogism:

(1) All and only virtuous actions have feature V.
(2) This action here and now has feature V.
Therefore (3) This action is the virtuous one.

These dialogues appear, however, to fail completely at satisfying the criteria for a Socratic definition and so never arrive at an adequate account of virtue or of any particular virtue.[3] We might wonder, more than contemporary commentators typically do, why this is so, and what it might say about Socrates' search in the first place. But we should at least recognize that *if* Socrates and his interlocutors had an answer to the "What is F?" question, then they would have a way of determining what the virtuous action is in the here and now by knowing what virtue is in general. Cleitophon's criticism is accurately reflected in these dialogues' failure to answer the "What is F?" question, which amounts to a failure to determine the content of virtue. In the next section I shall address, in a general way, the question of why the dialogues of definition fail to state a common feature of all and only virtuous actions. Then, I shall consider another type of attempt at answering the "What is F?" question. As scholars have noted,[4] although Socrates fails to find a Socratic form for virtuous *actions*, the dialogues appear to be more successful at saying what it is to *be* virtuous. In fact, in the view of most readers, Socrates believes that being virtuous is a matter of having knowledge – more specifically, of having knowledge of good and evil. How does this allegedly successfully answer to the "What is F?" question address the determining question which I have argued is front and center in these dialogues?

4.2 THE DIALOGUES OF DEFINITION AND THE "WHAT IS F?" QUESTION

In the dialogues of definition, Socrates searches for a statement of what is common to all token instances of virtuous action, for some particular virtue. It is an assumption of Socrates' investigation that there is such a common element, and that, if someone knows what it is, he can put it into words.[5] In the *Euthyphro*, for example, Socrates reprimands Euthyphro for offering an *example* of a (type of) pious action, rather than stating what piety is:

And do you recall that I wasn't urging you to teach me about one or two of those many things that are pious, but rather about the form [εἶδος] itself whereby all pious things are pious? Because you said, I think, that it was by virtue of a single

[3] There are parallel failures in the *Protagoras* and *Euthydemus*, despite their lack of the "What is F?" question. In the *Protagoras*, Socrates ultimately blames his and Protagoras' failure on the fact that they do not know "what virtue is" (361c5); and in the *Euthydemus* Socrates exclaims to Crito that he was unable to discover what the "royal craft" is (292e). See discussion below, 4.4.

[4] See, e.g., Burnyeat (1971).

[5] See *Ch*. 158e6–159a8, *Eu*. 5c8–9, *La*. 190c3–7. Cp. *Rep*. 1, 338a.

character [μιᾷ ἰδέᾳ] that impious things are impious and pious things pious [. . .] teach me then what in the world that character might be, so that by looking towards it and using it as a model I may call pious any action of yours or another's, which conforms to it, and may deny to be pious whatever action does not.[6] (6d9–e1 . . . 6e3–6)

Socrates wants to examine different actions in the world and be able to separate the pious ones from the impious by knowing what the distinctive and unique feature is that all and only pious actions have in common. Throughout the dialogues of definition Socrates employs a "techne-analogy" in his search for a successful answer to the "What is F?" question. In at least two ways techne appears to provide a good analogy with virtue. First, both techne and virtue involve reliably acting in some way: doing the right thing in the case of virtue, making or performing in the right way for technai. Both virtue and techne are concerned with action, in a broad sense. Second, in the dialogues of definition actions done from virtue and techne have a similar origin. A central part of the notion of a techne is that it is a kind of *knowledge*, so that the actions performed by the expert stem from a very specific source and not from, say, blind luck, inborn talent, or divine favor. To have a techne is to have knowledge. The analogy with virtue then works as follows: just as the making of shoes is the result of knowledge, doing the virtuous action is also the result of knowledge.

Notwithstanding such parallels between virtue and techne, there is an obvious and overwhelming *dis*analogy in the dialogues of definition between the results of discussions about the technai and the results of discussions about the virtues. Socrates and his interlocutors display no difficulty in satisfactorily answering questions posed in the elenchus about various technai, while they are never able to answer these same questions about virtue. Therefore, whatever analogical force Socrates may or may not intend with his introduction of techne, there remains an indisputable disanalogy in the fact that the questions posed about technai are easily answered, while the ones posed about virtue end in aporia. But if virtue *is* simply a techne, *why* do we have such a difficult time answering the very same questions that we have no trouble answering about the other technai?

The explanation of this rather obvious disanalogy is thought to be equally obvious: no one can answer the questions about virtue because no one is a moral expert, whereas there are plenty of experts in the ordinary technai. But this explanation cannot be adequate. Consider two features about the treatment of techne and the role of expertise in the Socratic dialogues which

[6] Translation based on Gallop (1997), with "pious" and "impious" for "holy" and "unholy."

have gone largely unnoticed. First, no one who is an acknowledged expert at some techne is ever questioned about his knowledge of that techne; we never witness expert knowledge in action in an elenchus. Interlocutors who *claim* (always incorrectly, of course) to be experts at one or more of the *virtues* are questioned, but a cobbler is never questioned about his shoemaking.[7] We witness only the reduction to aporia, or perhaps refutation,[8] of a character claiming knowledge or expertise in the area of virtue. Commentators presume that a cobbler could pass the elenchus about shoemaking, which I do not necessarily dispute, but we never see this happen, nor do we have a clear reference to it having happened.

Second, and more importantly, all of the questions about technai that are asked in the Socratic dialogues are answered easily and uncontroversially (at least as far as the dialogues themselves are concerned) *by people who are not experts in those crafts*. The same questions asked about virtue are unanswerable by characters claiming to have knowledge of virtue. But, on analogy with the technai, *if* those questions are answerable about virtue, it should *not* take an *expert* to answer them. I do not need to have any of the expert knowledge of a shipbuilder to know that shipbuilding is the craft that produces ships. We can easily miss the fact that in the Socratic dialogues all of the questions about technai (which are easily answered) are answered by *non*-experts. And it is those very same questions – the ones answerable by non-experts – that are unanswerable about the virtues.

So why do the dialogues fail in their search? The literature presents two lines of response. The first is that virtue-knowledge is, in fact, in at least some important respect(s) *not* analogous to ordinary techne-knowledge. Since Socrates brings up the possibility of "second-order" crafts in at least the *Charmides* and *Euthydemus*, this issue gets quite complex and is the subject of significant debate.[9] The second is that in fact there are no purely non-evaluative or "behavioral" definitions of virtuous action.[10] I shall not

[7] Socrates perhaps alludes to such discussions when he says that he went to the craftsmen while testing the oracle and found that they knew many things that he did not (*Ap*. 22d). The craftsmen, however, because of their success at their technai, thought they also knew "other most important things," which, as *Ap*. 30a proves, refers to ethical matters. It is entirely unclear, however, whether Socrates practiced the elenchus on the craftsmen with respect to their crafts and whether that is how he established that they knew their technai. It seems more plausible that Socrates could simply see that these men were experts by the products they manufactured (see *La*. 185e).

[8] See Frede (1992) for the former; Irwin (1995), ch. 2 for the latter.

[9] Klosko (1981) and Roochnik (1986) raise problems for the techne-analogy, particularly as developed in Irwin (1977). See also Irwin (1995). Roochnik (1996) argues that Plato in both the early and middle dialogues *rejects* techne as a model of virtue-knowledge; Parry (1996), on the contrary, argues that for Socrates and Plato virtue, and in particular justice, *is* a techne.

[10] See Sachs (1963). In Irwin (1995) this is part of his developmental account of the difference between the "early" and "middle" dialogues (the latter having given up the search for such a definition).

endorse a specific position in the first debate, for it would lead me too far astray to discuss what precisely the dialogues' conception of techne is. I agree entirely with the second. Scholars who endorse this position, however, are inclined to believe that "after" the Socratic dialogues[11] Plato gives up on trying to provide such an account of virtuous *action*, and replaces that question with a question about the virtuous *person*. The key passages for this are the "definitions" of the virtues in *Republic* 4. There Plato defines them in terms of different states of the tripartite soul, assigning different virtues to different parts or to certain relationships between the parts. In chapters six through eight I shall argue that the account in *Republic* 4 is not intended to supply definitions of the virtues in the Socratic sense, i.e., with a view to resolving determining questions. Rather, it is part of meeting the challenge of the skeptic who denies that there is any benefit in itself in being just.

We should recall that all of the unsuccessful dialogues of definition spring from puzzles about what the virtuous course of action is in the here and now. They have not left that determining question behind; it remains front and center. It is of course correct that the dialogues move, without much explicit discussion, *from* attempted definitions of virtuous *actions*, for example, that piety is "prosecuting the wrongdoer" (*Eu.* 5d) or "what is dear to all the gods" (*Eu.* 9e), or that courage is "standing firm in battle" (*La.* 190e), *to* definitions that describe virtuous *characters* (that is, what it is to *be* virtuous), for example, that "piety is knowledge of how to sacrifice and pray" (*Eu.* 14c) or that courage is "wise endurance" (*La.* 192d). It is said that this shift is in fact the implicit, or perhaps sometimes explicit, message of the dialogues – the Socratic answer to the "What is F?" question, despite his avowed inability to answer it.

But to say that virtue is knowledge, or knowledge of good and evil, is not to supply *the* answer to the question "What is virtue?" even if it is correct. It is to supply a quite different *kind* of answer. The claim that virtue is knowledge is a putative description of the state of the virtuous person. In most discussions this claim quickly leads to questions about the relationship between knowledge and action – central questions in moral psychology. Socrates is taken to believe that virtue is identical to knowledge, so that knowledge is both necessary and sufficient for virtue. While the necessity

See also Burnyeat (1971). These scholars believe, however, that the unsuccessful attempt to define virtuous *action* is replaced by a more successful attempt to define the virtuous *person*. I shall address this below.

[11] Whether that is meant chronologically as on a developmental model, or simply as a metaphor for a transition to more complex dialogues.

claim seems plausible enough, the sufficiency claim seems to many others, to Plato and Aristotle in particular on most accounts, to be too strong. As most readers will be aware, this is called "Socratic intellectualism." Socrates overemphasizes the cognitive, knowledge, component in the psychology of the virtuous person and neglects the importance of a non-cognitive, desiderative, component. For, on pain of denying incontinence, simply knowing what one ought to do, what is required by virtue, is not sufficient to do it – to believe the contrary conflicts with, in Aristotle's phrase, "the manifest appearances" (*NE* 7.2, 1145b28). What I want to make clear is that this type of "knowing of what virtue is," namely that it is knowledge, only concerns the psychological state of the virtuous person. Answering the question "What is virtue?" by reference to persons rather than actions is not simply an alternative method of answering the *same* question. It is true that the dialogues often turn to what it is to *be* virtuous once an attempt at defining virtuous *actions* has failed. But when we abandon giving a definition of virtuous actions, we do not simply move from an "act-centered" to an alternative "agent-centered" account. There are also significant ramifications, the most important of which is that the question of how to determine which actions are the virtuous ones is dropped. Knowing what it is to be a virtuous person *goes no distance* towards determining which actions *are* virtuous. While I agree wholeheartedly that Plato rejects the possibility of providing a "behavioral" account of virtuous action, his rejection of the idea that we can provide a non-evaluative, behavioral, description of what all virtuous actions have in common does not mean that he can or does simply abandon the problem that such a definition was supposed to solve. Knowing that virtue is knowledge of good and evil will not help with Socrates' dilemma in the *Crito*: he needs to determine *which* action is the virtuous one, remaining in prison or escaping.

The Socratic dialogues show that the attempt to state a common feature of all virtuous actions in non-evaluative terms is doomed: the "What is F?" question cannot be successfully answered for virtuous actions. We should not therefore throw the baby out with the bathwater. While such a definition may be impossible, the determining question it was meant to solve remains as pressing as it ever was. The virtuous person, by definition, and because of his psychological state, has the ability to answer determining questions correctly. In other words, the virtuous person correctly identifies (at a minimum) what must be done; he knows what virtue is.[12] In what does

[12] She is also of course motivated to do it, whether this motivation stems simply from knowledge or from some desiderative state in combination with it.

this knowledge consist? Well, apparently not in a definition. When scholars maintain that Socrates believes that virtue is knowledge of good and evil, most of the attention is paid to the alleged implausibility of knowledge alone being sufficient for action. What gets lost in the shuffle is the point that *that* knowledge, whether sufficient or simply necessary for action, fails to answer the outstanding determining question. The fact that this question remains outstanding both explains and justifies the aporetic end of these dialogues.

I shall turn now to parts of three dialogues: the *Euthyphro*, *Euthydemus*, and *Protagoras*. In different ways each of these foregrounds the importance of the aiming/determining distinction.

4.3 AIMING AND DETERMINING IN THE *EUTHYPHRO*

It is easy to find fault with Euthyphro. While in some dialogues Socrates appears to have worthy, or nearly worthy, adversaries, Euthyphro is not one of them. Socrates engages in conditional irony early and frequently.[13] Euthyphro is pompous, self-righteous, and apparently incapable of reaching even a modest degree of critical distance from his own beliefs.[14] He lacks the intellectual ability of a Protagoras, Gorgias, or Critias, and the integrity, honesty, or faithfulness of a Hippocrates, Laches, or Crito. Nor, as a sort of perverse saving grace, does he hold the radical and interesting, if at times morally repulsive, views of a Polus, Callicles, or Thrasymachus. Finally he does not even provide the comic relief of a Hippias, Euthydemus, or Dionysodorus. Euthyphro's particular combination of these qualities can make him an especially unattractive and unlikable interlocutor. Despite all of this, however, we shall see that he has something significant in common with Socrates. As I have mentioned, the investigation into the nature of piety stems from a very particular situation that Euthyphro faces, and his reaction to it. Appreciating this is important for understanding the substantial ethical common ground between Socrates and the over-zealous Euthyphro. The distinction between having virtue as an aim and determining which actions are virtuous will once again be crucial.

Socrates and Euthyphro meet in front of the judicial building where Socrates is answering his indictment and Euthyphro is filing a charge. As Socrates and the reader soon discover, Euthyphro is prosecuting his

[13] See Vasiliou (1999a) and (2002a).

[14] This is a common impression of Euthyphro; see the succinct survey of assessments by Beversluis (2000), 162–3.

elderly father for murder, an action which shocks Socrates and has enraged Euthyphro's family. The facts of the case are rather complex (4c3–d5). A dependant (πελάτης) of Euthyphro, who had helped Euthyphro's family when they farmed in Naxos, was drunk and in a rage slaughtered (ἀποσφάττει) one of the household servants.[15] Euthyphro's father then bound the killer hand and foot and threw him in a ditch while he sent to Athens for advice from a religious authority (ἐξηγητής) about what to do with him. The father paid no attention to the welfare of the bound man and he subsequently died from exposure before there was any response from Athens.

Euthyphro's household has a mess on their hands. And Euthyphro has a concrete practical problem: what should he do? The father's actions have caused, however unintentionally, the death of someone, and so something ethically significant has certainly occurred. But what should be done, in particular by Euthyphro as his son, is not by any means immediately clear to us, I think, or to Plato's audience, given the rest of the circumstances. I take it that the point of the complexity of the situation is to present what is called in contemporary terms a "hard case." One ought to look carefully at the reactions of Euthyphro, Socrates, and Euthyphro's family in order to understand fully what is at issue. Socrates' initial reaction after he learns that Euthyphro is prosecuting his father for murder, but before he has learned the facts of the case, is sufficient to show that Euthyphro's action is considered very serious and highly questionable. Euthyphro is not simply answering questions about the case at a trial or cooperating with authorities; he himself is at the courthouse bringing the charge of murder against his own father.

Socrates' important reaction is difficult and misunderstood. On hearing that the charge is murder, Socrates responds (I translate this passage very literally):

By Heracles! Surely, Euthyphro, it is not known by the majority in what manner such things could ever be conducted correctly [ὅπῃ ποτὲ ὀρθῶς ἔχει];[16] for I at

[15] The word ἀποσφάττειν connotes violence, typically meaning cutting the throat of someone (or some animal). Thus the action of the "victim" is far more active and violent than the "action" (neglect) of the elderly father, who, whether or not one considers him a "killer" (ὁ κτείνας), certainly did not "slaughter" anyone; see Harris (2001), 79. For a discussion of the relevance of the ambiguous status of a *pelates* see Harris (2002), 424.

[16] The force of the ποτέ should not be read as meaning, how could such an action ever be correct? i.e., it can *never* be correct. ποτέ is frequently added to Socrates' formulation of the "What is F?" question, quite generally, to indicate the difficulty of the question, what "in the world" is piety after all? See, e.g., 9c4, 13e10.

any rate do not think that it belongs to any chance person to do this correctly [ὀρθῶς],[17] but to one who is already surely far along in wisdom. (4a11–b2)

Socrates claims that most people would not know how to proceed in prosecuting their father correctly: only someone who is "already far along in wisdom" could be confident in taking such a bold and morally risky action.[18] Socrates then attempts to make Euthyphro's action appear less radical by supposing that his father has killed someone else in the household (4b4–6). Socrates' reasoning here is important. As we would expect from the account of Socrates we have given so far, he does not say that it would *always* be wrong to prosecute one's father, only that in order to be confident that one is doing such a serious action rightly one must be very wise. What is most important is, of course, to act virtuously, not to refrain from prosecuting one's father. So Socrates attempts to supply a context where such an action

[17] This word is excised by Burnet (1924), who is followed in the Grube (in Cooper [1997]) and Gallop (1997) translations. I think that the repeated emphasis is important. The point is precisely that Socrates does not see how just anyone can do this *correctly*. Of course anyone can prosecute their father – but what only someone far along in wisdom would know is how to do it correctly: that is, under what circumstances it would be the right thing to do. In addition, omission of the second ὀρθῶς aside, both the Grube and Gallop translations seem, in different ways, potentially misleading. Grube: "Certainly, Euthyphro, most men would not know how they could do this and be right. It is not the part of anyone to do this, but . . ." I think this slights the force of the adverb, ὀρθῶς. The idea is not about doing an action and being right, but performing an action, the prosecution of one's father in this case, correctly – that is, performing the action in the right manner, under the right circumstances, for the right reasons, etc. Grube's translation makes it sound as though there is a question about the *inherent* rightness or wrongness of prosecuting one's father: one cannot prosecute one's father *and* be right. But, as we shall see, both Socrates and Euthyphro would deny this. Further, it makes nonsense of the idea that a person "far along in wisdom" would be qualified to do this. Thus Socrates believes that there might be such circumstances, but thinks that only a near moral expert could be confident in judging them correctly. Gallop translates: "Well, Euthyphro, most people are obviously ignorant of where the right lies in such a case, since I can't imagine any ordinary person taking such an action." This translation, also following Burnet's excision, suggests (though less explicitly than Grube's) that the fault lies with the taking of the action as such, and not with whether the action is correct.

[18] Beversluis (2000), 164–6 accuses Socrates of inconsistency with his position in the *Crito* and *Gorgias* in suddenly appealing to what most people think as evidence of the incorrectness of Euthyphro's decision. He writes, "[Socrates] observes that most people would strongly disapprove of a son who prosecuted his own father. He adds that he himself is inclined to agree that it would not be right for just anyone to do such a thing" (164). But this is an inaccurate paraphrase. Socrates is not referring to an opinion *of* the majority, and then endorsing it, but rather making a knowledge claim *about* the majority: the majority of people would be ignorant about the circumstances in which it would be correct to prosecute one's father for murder. The opinion expressed here is pure Socrates. It has nothing to do with any "common belief" about not prosecuting your father; Euthyphro's family will present that point of view momentarily. (Beversluis, 164, n. 21 also claims that Euthyphro's family does not object that it is wrong for a son to prosecute his father; but Euthyphro says that they do say precisely this at 4d9–e1.) Here Socrates simply declares that a person would have to be a veritable moral expert to judge confidently in such tricky moral terrain; and most people surely could not do that. There is absolutely no appeal to any views or opinions of the many. Nor is there any claim that such an action can never be right.

might most easily be understood to be the virtuous one: if your father has, for example, killed your mother or sibling. He does not say, nor does he believe, that this would be the *only* context in which prosecuting one's father would be the virtuous action; it is just that this is, relatively speaking, more easily understood.

Euthyphro responds as follows:

> It is ridiculous [γελοῖον], Socrates, that you think that it makes any difference whether the victim is a stranger or a household member; it is necessary to watch for [φυλάττειν] this alone: whether the killer acted justly or not. And if justly, then let [him] go, but if not justly, prosecute, even if the killer shares your hearth and table. The pollution is the same if you knowingly associate with such a person and do not purify yourself and him by bringing him to justice. (4b7–c3)

This should sound to us quite similar to SV, and of course Socrates never disagrees with it. Just as Socrates does not believe that prosecuting one's father is always wrong, Euthyphro does not believe that killing is always wrong. What is always wrong is killing *unjustly*, which simply follows from SV as a limiting condition: it is never right to do wrong. Furthermore, Euthyphro argues, if you knowingly associate with someone who has killed unjustly, even if that person is part of your household, you are acting impiously and wrongly if you let the unjust killer go unpunished.[19]

Matters are a bit more complicated than Euthyphro makes clear, however. There are two relevant actions at issue, and thus two moral assessments that need to be made. The first concerns the proper understanding of what the father did: has the father killed the hired man unjustly, and so is he truly a "wrongdoer"? Two facts about who the victim is may appear relevant to *this* determination:

(1) the fact that the victim is a person who has just "slaughtered" a member of the father's household;
(2) the fact that the victim is a "day-laborer" and so is inherently of less value as a human being than those in the upper classes.

(1) appears obviously relevant, and, as we shall see, is brought up repeatedly. It is (1) that caused the father to treat the victim in the way he did. If the person had not just murdered someone, the father would never have

[19] For Euthyphro the moral wrong goes hand in hand with religious prohibition, and so Euthyphro sees wrongdoing as a matter of "pollution" (μιάσμα). But that is unimportant for the present point; Euthyphro is arguing that it is wrong and impious to knowingly allow an unjust murderer to go unpunished. The relation between religion and ethics is explored in the "third definition" of piety, where Euthyphro agrees – with what degree of understanding it is difficult to tell – that the gods love piety (i.e. what is right) because it is pious, and not that an action is pious because it is loved (10d). Therefore Euthyphro agrees that what is pious has a nature of its own that is independent of the attitude of the gods.

bound him and tossed him in a ditch. Even if he was not treated as he should have been,[20] the fact that he had just cut someone else's throat in drunken anger does mitigate to some degree the rough treatment he receives. In modern terms, the father committed, at most, "involuntary manslaughter" not murder, and the fact that the person he did this to had just "slaughtered" someone else is particularly relevant. (1) is brought up first by Euthyphro himself as the explanation of his father's neglect, which led to the hired hand's death (4d1–3), then in describing his family's condemnation of him (4d8–9), and, finally, it is repeated later by Socrates (9a3–4) when he raises questions again about Euthyphro's confidence in the correctness of his action.[21] Despite the fact that this point is raised three times, however, Euthyphro *never* addresses it, nor does he even attempt to explain why it is not relevant to an assessment of the father's action.[22]

By contrast, we find it repugnant to consider (2) morally relevant.[23] It is important to notice, however, that, regardless of Athenian class prejudice, no one in the dialogue cites (2) as by itself generating mitigating grounds in the assessment of the action. The one passage that even hints that it might be relevant comes from Socrates himself at the very end of the dialogue when he says that without clear knowledge of what is pious and impious Euthyphro would never "have tried to prosecute on behalf of a man, a servant, a man, his elderly father [ὑπὲρ ἀνδρὸς θητὸς ἄνδρα πρεσβύτην πατέρα]" (15d5–6). Although awkward in English, this translation retains the Greek word order and repetition of ἀνήρ in the original and thus the emphasized contrast between the two different descriptions of each man – one man, a servant, the other, his elderly father. Even here, however, it is not (2) by itself that carries the argumentative burden. The contrast of primary significance, which will be important in the second moral dilemma I shall discuss (whether Euthyphro should prosecute his father), is simply between the treatment of one's father and others. It is hard nevertheless not to see the mention of the other man as a "servant" as intended to deepen that contrast, and thus to reflect common Athenian class prejudice; Socrates could have simply repeated the more frequent description of him

[20] We would, of course, need more details to render a more confident final judgement. Did the man continue to pose a threat, and so had to be forcibly restrained, or was he shocked and remorseful at what he had just done? Did the father, who is quite old (4a2–3, 15d6), reasonably fear for his own safety and the safety of others in the house? And so on.

[21] At the culmination of what we shall see is an important, but neglected, stretch of argument.

[22] As we shall see below, Euthyphro speaks to different identity issues.

[23] Beversluis (2000), 165 n. 23 attempts to defend Socrates against Irving Stone's criticism that he never paid attention to lower classes. While Stone's view is an exaggeration, I find no evidence that Socrates holds that all human beings qua human beings are of equal worth. There is obviously a lot of room between these two positions.

as a killer.[24] But no one in the dialogue argues that the person's death is of less concern simply because he is a servant. Indeed the much more often repeated emphasis on the victim as himself a murderer does not appear to lose any force simply because the person he killed was a house-servant.

So much for what the father has done. The second moral puzzle is what Euthyphro himself should do in relation to his father's action. Obviously, deciding this depends crucially on how one resolves the first issue. If, as Euthyphro's family complains, the father either did not in truth kill the servant or did not cause his death unjustly, but in the course of reasonably restraining a man who was a murderer, then, by Euthyphro's own argument, neither Euthyphro nor anyone else should prosecute the father, for he is no wrongdoer. The key problem with Euthyphro is that he slides past this first issue far too quickly, and proceeds to focus on a second one: that an unjust killer must be prosecuted, even if that unjust killer is one's father. The relationships between the victim and the prosecutor, and between the killer and the prosecutor, do not count against doing the right thing and prosecuting the wrongdoer. Euthyphro shows his commitment here to SV; he rejects the idea that one should value one's father more highly than doing what is right. And Socrates would certainly agree. But we have seen in chapters one and two that he understands SV, crucially, as an aim. It would be wrong to elevate the aim of one's father's welfare above virtue, but this does *not* mean that the welfare of one's father, and the fact that a person *is* one's father, might not be relevant in the deliberation about what the virtuous course of action *is*.[25]

Euthyphro believes that, if anyone prosecutes someone who does not deserve prosecution, that person is acting wrongly towards the person he prosecutes. Indeed, Euthyphro has made it apparent that this is his view earlier in the dialogue when he displays no concern about determining what is just in reaction to Socrates' ironically flattering picture of Meletus.[26] Euthyphro, missing any irony in Socrates' claim that Meletus seems to be the only one of the youth to start out in the right way, simply objects that Socrates is wrong about Meletus:

> For he absolutely [ἀτεχνῶς] seems to me to start off by doing evil [κακουργεῖν] to the city "from its hearth," by trying to wrong you [ἐπιχειρῶν ἀδικεῖν σέ]. (3a7–8)

Euthyphro simply applies a version of SV without bothering to make any determination at all. Of course, *if* Meletus is wronging Socrates, then

[24] Of course, Plato is writing this dialogue, and his elitism is clear in the *Republic* and elsewhere.
[25] A similar point is the central contention about the *Crito* in chapter two.
[26] See Vasiliou (1999a), 468–9 for a discussion of this passage and its irony.

by definition he must be "doing evil." The question however is *whether* Meletus' prosecution of Socrates *is* in fact a case of doing wrong. Euthyphro says that Meletus "does wrong" to Socrates before he even finds out how or why Meletus says Socrates corrupts the youth. He follows the above speech with, "So tell me *also*, what does he say you do to corrupt the youth?" At this point in the conversation Euthyphro's uncritical assumption that Socrates is not doing wrong might look like the reasonable confidence of a friend. But with hindsight it becomes more troubling once we see that he does not distinguish between appreciating the importance of never acting wrongly and the issue of determining, in some particular situation, what acting wrongly *is*. One might think that he ought to hear this first, and then afterwards pass judgement on whether Socrates is being wronged or not.[27] There is an extra layer of irony here insofar as Socrates' views about the gods, and his "finding it hard to believe" the traditional stories about them, might lead us to suspect that Euthyphro would in fact find his views impious, if only he were less concerned with his own troubles.

By Euthyphro's own lights, then, false prosecution is doing a wrong. This wrong would be compounded, and also be clearly describable as a major impiety, if one wrongly prosecuted one's own father. Euthyphro therefore has engaged in an extremely risky action; if he is wrong about his substantive judgement that his father acted unjustly, a fact which we will see that not only has he not determined carefully, but about which he does not appreciate the nature of the judgement that must be made, then he himself will have committed a very substantial moral offence, worse than if he had acted wrongly against just anyone. When Euthyphro confidently and proudly declares that it is irrelevant whether the victim or the killer is a stranger or a household member, then, he means that it is irrelevant in a deliberation about whether a person who has killed unjustly ought to be prosecuted. And, as I said above, Socrates voices no objection to this. Since he lacks an answer to the "What is F?" question, he can never know in his own case that what he is doing is not wrong (except, as always, via the intervention of his divine sign). He supposes that Euthyphro, in a similar position, would only feel forced to risk doing so great an injustice – namely wrongly prosecuting his own father – because his father had killed one of Euthyphro's family.[28] Socrates and Euthyphro are in complete agreement

[27] Contrast Socrates' reaction to hearing Euthyphro's account of his prosecution. Even when he hears the surprising fact that Euthyphro is prosecuting his father he does not claim Euthyphro is wrong; he asks about the charge and the case. Then, as we saw above, after he hears the seriousness of the charge, he still would not say that Euthyphro is acting wrongly; of course he cannot say this without violating his disavowal of knowledge.

[28] Or, perhaps more accurately, supposes Euthyphro *should* feel and reason this way.

about SV. But Euthyphro's conviction has troubling consequences because it is not combined with any awareness of even his own *potential* ignorance about what virtue is in general, and, as the dialogue makes clear, his closely related fallibility with respect to judgements about the virtuous action in the here and now. He is blind to the significance of the determining question: has his father in these circumstances in fact acted unjustly?

This has caused confusion in commentators. John Beversluis accuses Socrates of inconsistency, given the passage in the *Gorgias* (479e ff.) in which Socrates argues that a person should denounce wrongdoing especially in the case of his loved ones since he would thereby be improving their souls.[29] Beversluis argues:

> The only possible conclusion that can be drawn from all this is that, given Socrates' views about the duties of people vis-à-vis wrongdoers, as set forth in the *Gorgias*, there is nothing outrageous or even mildly dubious about Euthyphro's litigation against his father; on the contrary, he is doing exactly what he ought to be doing. Insofar as Socrates denies (or questions) this in the *Euthyphro*, he contradicts himself. He also does Euthyphro the grave disservice of diverting him from doing what he himself believes is the right thing.[30]

I quote this passage as an example of the confusion wrought by the failure to distinguish SV from the question of what the virtuous action is. Since Socrates everywhere trumpets the prosecution and punishment of wrongdoers, why does he suddenly pick on poor Euthyphro when he tries to do the same? He can only be contradicting himself and arguing unfairly. But this reasoning is incorrect. Socrates agrees in the *Euthyphro*, and everywhere else, that the wrongdoer should be punished, as we saw in the *Gorgias*.[31] Euthyphro also agrees wholeheartedly, indeed zealously, with SV. But he fails to see that by itself SV is insufficient to generate correct action; one must also make a determination about what the right thing to do *is*. I shall now show that the text clearly indicates that Euthyphro does not have a clear grasp of this most crucial distinction.

By the end of Euthyphro's speech (4e3), he is vehement that his family, and, as he thinks, Socrates, are wrong that it is impious for a son to prosecute his father. But we have seen that Socrates does not say this, and that,

[29] This is the passage which provokes Callicles into the argument, when he asks whether Socrates is serious, and says that if he were, it would turn the world "upside down." See discussion in 3.5.

[30] Beversluis (2000), 167.

[31] The claim that "wrongdoers ought to be prosecuted/punished" does not strictly follow from SV, although Socrates (and Euthyphro) treat it as though it does. Socrates appears to understand punishment as a corrective to help a person become more virtuous; see, e.g., *Gor*. 472e, 480a–481b; cf. *Pr*. 323c–324c.

in addition, Euthyphro himself believes that it is doing someone wrong to prosecute them unfairly (as is happening to Socrates at the hands of Meletus). The principle upon which Euthyphro relies is that a wrongdoer must be punished, regardless of who he is, whom he has wronged, or the nature of his relationship to the punisher. Furthermore, we learn from Euthyphro's own mouth two essential facts that are relevant to whether the father is, in fact, a wrongdoer: (1) the victim died of neglect and accidentally – the father clearly did not intend to cause his death; and (2) the victim had just murdered someone else. These factors certainly appear to be relevant to whether it is right and just to prosecute the father for murder, rather than take some other sort of action. Euthyphro, however, never considers them at all. He does not attempt to rebut them, nor does he even seem to understand what mitigating force his family intends them to have. He sees the matter as simply one of trying to deny punishment to a wrongdoer. He claims precise (ἀκριβῶς) knowledge of piety and impiety and so claims that he has no fear of doing something impious in prosecuting his father (4e–5a). But Euthyphro does not see that the difficult moral dilemma is not whether a son should prosecute a father who has done wrong, but *whether* the father *has* acted wrongly, and in a way that rightly deserves prosecution for murder by his son. Euthyphro never speaks to this issue.

After a barrage of conditional irony, Socrates proceeds to pose his "What is F?" question. This investigation arises as the result of the demand by Socrates to be shown how the knowledge of piety that Euthyphro claims to possess is able to determine that the action he is taking in the here and now against his father is the right one.[32] Socrates gets Euthyphro to assent

[32] Beversluis (2000), 168 criticizes Socrates and "legions of commentators" for unfairly foisting on Euthyphro the Socratic approach to moral philosophy – i.e. attempting to come up with an answer to a "What is F?" question: "The implication is that . . . [Euthyphro] cannot know that it is pious to prosecute his father unless he knows what piety is. The fact is, however, that Euthyphro has *already* justified his litigation by invoking the principle that wrongdoers ought to be prosecuted, including friends and relatives – a principle that Socrates accepts. So if Euthyphro's father is a wrongdoer, the morally required course of action seems crystal clear: he ought to be prosecuted. So why does Euthyphro need a definition of piety? The answer cannot be: in order to determine whether it is pious to prosecute his father . . . In the *Gorgias*, Socrates has no definition of justice; but that does not prevent him from arguing that it is just to prosecute wrongdoers – all wrongdoers, including member of one's own family. If the absence of a definition of the relevant moral term poses no problems for Socrates, why should it pose any for Euthyphro?" (his emphasis). The crucial sentence is the following: "So *if Euthyphro's father is a wrongdoer*, the morally required course of action seems crystal clear: he ought to be prosecuted." The problem facing Euthyphro concerns determining the truth of the if-clause; for, if his father is *not* a wrongdoer, then his prosecution is impious and wrong. While Beversluis is right that Socrates' lack of definition does not prevent him from saying that wrongdoers should be punished, Socrates never goes ahead to prosecute anyone (as is mentioned in the opening of the *Euthyphro* [2b]) precisely because he lacks knowledge of who the wrongdoer is: how can one know *this* without knowing what is pious and impious? Socrates demands justification

to the idea that all pious actions are pious "through one form," and then asks him, as a knower of piety, to tell him what that form is. Euthyphro replies:

> I say then that the pious is that which I am doing now: to prosecute the wrongdoer [τῷ ἀδικοῦντι] whether about murder or temple robbery or the one at fault about any other of such things, even if he happens to be your father or your mother or anyone else at all; but not to prosecute is impious. (5d8–e2)

Before Alexander Nehamas' important article, it was said that Euthyphro did not understand that what was wanted was a *type* of action and not simply a token example of piety. Nehamas persuasively shows that, although Euthyphro has not given a definition, but only an example, of piety, he is not confused about the type/token distinction.[33] Euthyphro has given an example of a type of pious action: to prosecute the wrongdoer, of which his particular action, the prosecution of his father, is a token. To defend his definition, he offers a "great proof" by appealing to a divine example where a son punished a father. He argues that while Zeus, who is agreed to be "the best and most just" (ἄριστον καὶ δικαιότατον) of gods, despite the fact that he castrated and bound his father for swallowing his sons "unjustly" (οὐκ ἐν δίκῃ), everyone is angry at him for prosecuting his father for being a wrongdoer (ἀδικοῦντι) (6a1–5), and so people end up contradicting themselves.[34] What is the example of Zeus supposed to prove? If we assume that Zeus always acts rightly, it shows that a son can rightly punish his father, when his father has acted unjustly. Zeus' knowledge that he is doing the right thing, however, must include knowledge *that* his father has acted unjustly. Regardless of the extent to which Euthyphro fails to supply an adequate definition of piety by Socratic standards, more importantly the divine example goes no distance towards addressing the worry of Socrates and Euthyphro's family about the rightness of his concrete action in the here and now. All his example shows is that punishment of a father who has acted unjustly by his son is *sometimes* right. But the burden Euthyphro faces is to show that *his* prosecution of his father in these very particular and complex circumstances is the right thing to do. Therefore to show that he is not acting impiously, as Socrates wants, he must

not for Euthyphro's claim that wrongdoers ought to be punished, even when they are relatives, but for the claim that what Euthyphro has done in this very case is the right and pious action. And for this to be the case, for it to be the case that Euthyphro *knows* that he is prosecuting his father rightly, he must know what piety is.

[33] Nehamas (1975/1999).

[34] Here is another similarity between Euthyphro and Socrates. Just as they both hold SV, Euthyphro is concerned with conflict in the beliefs of others.

show how he knows that his father is guilty of wrongdoing which requires him to be prosecuted as a murderer. Simply to repeat that a wrongdoer ought to punished, even by his son, goes no distance towards establishing this.

After Socrates expresses some reservations about the truth of stories about the gods, he returns to Euthyphro's specific answer, and questions him again, focusing on the concrete case at issue:

SOCRATES: For now try to say more clearly what I asked you to just now. For earlier, friend, you did not teach me adequately when I asked you what piety is, but you told me that piety happens to be this: what you are now doing, prosecuting your father for murder.
EUTHYPHRO: And I was telling the truth, Socrates.
SOCRATES: Perhaps.

(6c9–d6)

Socrates' complaint focuses once again on the token case, which Euthyphro still insists he is right about. Socrates' "perhaps" indicates that they have not made any headway on resolving that question. Since Euthyphro grants that there are many pious actions other than his prosecution of his father, what is it about Euthyphro's prosecution of his father that makes it (and other alleged pious actions) pious?

Socrates formulates the demand quoted above:

> And do you recall that I wasn't urging you to teach me about one or two of those many things that are pious, but rather about the form itself whereby all pious things are pious? Because you said, I think, that it was by virtue of a single character impious things are impious and pious things pious . . . teach me then what in the world that character might be, so that by looking towards it and using it as a model I may call pious any action of yours or another's, which conforms to it, and may deny to be pious whatever action does not. (6d9–e1 . . . 6e3–6)

Note that it is explicit here that Socrates is seeking a method for determining what the virtuous/pious action is in concrete circumstances,[35] which is necessary if they are to make a confident judgement on the piety of Euthyphro's action. This project is necessary if they want to be able to act properly on their joint commitment to SV.

When Euthyphro replies that the pious is what is dear to the gods, Socrates is pleased and congratulates him on providing the right sort of answer (7a). Socrates then turns to an apparently ad hominem argument against this definition. Beginning from Euthyphro's belief that the gods

[35] By itself this does not necessarily imply that one needs to maintain the priority of definition. But it does insist that *some* method is needed.

disagree about some matters, Socrates elicits Euthyphro's assent to the claim that the topics of disagreement, for both gods and people, are "the just and the unjust, the fine and the shameful, and the good and the bad" (7d1–2). Socrates proceeds to attempt to draw a contradiction: how can piety be what the gods love, if some of the gods are pleased by a particular action, say, "what you are now doing, punishing your father" (8b1–2) but others are displeased? We should note again Socrates' emphasis on the concrete action of Euthyphro, insisting that the question is how we can know that *it* is the right thing to do.

I quote at some length the interchange that follows, for it has not received much scholarly comment, and it shows that Euthyphro does not grasp the central role of the determining question. The highlighted numbers represent the five times Socrates repeats the principle, which he and Euthyphro take to follow from SV, that a wrongdoer ought to be prosecuted. The highlighted letters show the contrast he draws by reference to making determinations in the particular, concrete, case.

EUTHYPHRO: But I think, Socrates, that none of the gods would differ with one another about this at least: that it is (**1**) necessary for a person who has killed someone unjustly [ἀδίκως] to pay the penalty.

SOCRATES: What? Have you ever heard of some person, Euthyphro, who argues that (**2**) one who has killed unjustly, or who has done any other thing whatsoever unjustly, ought not to pay the penalty?

EUTHYPHRO: They never stop arguing these things, both in the courts and elsewhere; for although they have done very many injustices [ἀδικοῦντες γὰρ πάμπολλα], they do and say all sorts of things to avoid the penalty.

SOCRATES: And do they also agree, Euthyphro, that (**A**) they do injustice, and having agreed, nevertheless (**3**) say that they ought not to pay the penalty?

EUTHYPHRO: In no way [do they do] this, at any rate.

SOCRATES: Then they do not do and say *everything*; for I think that they do not dare to say this, nor do they even argue it, that (**4**) if indeed they do injustice they should not pay the penalty, but I think that (**B**) they deny *that* they do injustice. Isn't this right?

EUTHYPHRO: You speak the truth.

SOCRATES: Then it isn't the case that they argue about *that*, at any rate: (**5**) that the one who does injustice ought not to pay the penalty, but perhaps they argue about *this*, (**C**) who is the one doing injustice, what he did, and when.

EUTHYPHRO: You speak the truth.

SOCRATES: Therefore haven't the gods also experienced these same things, if indeed they quarrel about the just and unjust matters, as your account [says], and (**D**) some say that they do injustice to one another, but others deny it? Since surely, wondrous man, no one among gods or human beings dares [τολμᾷ] to say that (**6**) a wrongdoer ought not to be punished.

EUTHYPHRO: Yes, this is true, Socrates, at least on the main point.

SOCRATES: But I think at any rate, Euthyphro, that those who argue, both humans and gods (*if* indeed gods argue), argue about (**E**) each [ἕκαστον] of the things that have been done, differing about some action [πράξεώς τινος πέρι], some saying that it has been done justly, but others unjustly. Isn't this so?

EUTHYPHRO: Very much so.

SOCRATES: Come now, my friend Euthyphro, teach me too, so that I may become wiser: what is your proof that all the gods believe that that man has been killed unjustly, the man who, while a hired laborer, becomes a murderer, is bound by the master of the victim, ends up dying because of his bonds before the one who bound him can learn what it is necessary to do with him from the authorities, and that on behalf of such a man it is correct that a son prosecute and press the charge of murder on his father? Come, try to show me something clear about these things that indicates that all the gods definitely believe that this action is done correctly – and if you show me this adequately, I will never ever stop praising your wisdom.

(8b7–9b3)

This rather neglected passage is of paramount importance for the argument.[36] I shall make several remarks about it.

First, the passage occurs as a digression from the main topic, triggered by Euthyphro's first speech quoted above.[37] He had defined piety as what the gods love, and Socrates was proceeding to raise problems about this as a way of picking out all and only the pious actions in the world since, by Euthyphro's own admission, the gods disagree with one another and, as Socrates has pointed out, the matters about which people (and presumably also the gods)[38] disagree concern the just and unjust, fine and shameful, and the good and bad. Then Euthyphro states that surely the gods do not disagree that one who does injustice ought to be punished. This principle, like SV, however, needs substantive determinations to be made before it can be properly acted upon. If one should always act virtuously above all, then it can never be right to do wrong, not even, as was said in the *Crito*, in return for a wrong. As I argued in chapter two, this principle, however, leaves entirely undetermined what *is* wrong; it merely asserts a conditional: *if* an action is wrong/unjust/vicious, then it must never be done. In reading the *Crito* we had to be careful not to slip into what I called a "moralizing interpretation" of this principle, where we think we already know

[36] For example, there is no mention of it in Irwin (1995) or Beversluis (2000). McPherran (1996), 42 recognizes that Socrates is questioning Euthyphro about his particular case.

[37] Allen (1980) calls it an "interlude."

[38] "*If* they disagree," as Socrates keeps adding, thereby implying that this is not his view but Euthyphro's. See 7.3 for some discussion of Socrates' quite different account of the gods in *Rep*. 2.

what is wrong; e.g., breaking out of prison, or bribing the guardsmen, and so on.

The idea that wrongdoers must be punished presents the same problem for Euthyphro. He needs to show that all of the gods love his prosecution of his father, and he wrongly takes himself to have established that by asserting that all of the gods would believe that someone who commits an injustice ought to be punished. The only outstanding issue, as far as Euthyphro is concerned, is that he is his father's son, and he has tried to mitigate this, as we have seen, by appeal to divine cases where a son has punished a father. He has entirely missed what I have argued is the crucial issue: *has* his father done something unjust and something that warrants his son prosecuting him for murder? It is this substantive, determining, question that must be answered.

And this is just what Socrates tries to show Euthyphro in the passage. He agrees that not only would the gods not dispute that claim that wrongdoers ought to be punished but that no person whatsoever would "dare" to; a zealous moralist like Euthyphro does not even imagine someone like Polus or Callicles. Euthyphro thinks that this is what is at issue in most court cases, and indeed in people's objections to his treatment of his father, but it is not. By the end of the passage he seems to be at last understanding the difference between his, for the present purposes, uncontroversial assertion that wrongdoers ought to be punished, and his very controversial substantive judgement that his father has killed someone unjustly and ought to be prosecuted by him for murder. In his concluding speech Socrates rehearses in meticulous detail all of the relevant aspects of the case that make it a "hard case," and thus difficult to make a clear judgement about. Now that he has shown Euthyphro that his strong belief, supported by the gods, that doers of injustice must be punished goes no distance towards making the determination of the case at hand, he might hope that Euthyphro would withdraw his claim to knowledge about the concrete case. Euthyphro of course concedes nothing, claiming that he could show him clearly even though it would be a big deal. Euthyphro has failed to understand the issue.

Socrates' speech at 9c–d draws the discussion away again from the concrete case. He says that even if he were to come up with the best proof possible that all of the gods hate the action of Euthyphro's father, and consider the death of the victim unjust, that still would not advance the issue of discovering what piety is, since he and Euthyphro are still operating under the definition that the pious is both loved and hated by the gods. So, Socrates proposes, perhaps they should amend the definition

of piety to what *all* the gods love, and of impiety to what *all* the gods hate.[39]

While the characters in the *Gorgias* are disturbing for the way that they would ignore, openly flout, or nefariously reinterpret SV, Euthyphro's commitment to SV, combined with his lack of understanding that he needs a way of making determinate judgements about virtue in concrete cases, generates a different sort of danger. Strong commitment to SV without Socrates' disavowal of knowing what virtue is results in a fundamentalist type of moralist, blindly confident not just that there *is* a right and wrong, but that he *knows* what it is.[40] Socrates' discussion shows us the critical importance of the realization of one's ignorance, the resulting aporia, and his own disavowal. As he reminds Euthyphro at the end of the dialogue, if Euthyphro did not think he knew that his father's action was unjust, he would never have ventured to prosecute him. Euthyphro has given no indication of how he knows this. We may criticize the stringency of Socrates' "What is F?" question and its demand that one state one form that all and only virtuous actions have in common, but we (and Socrates) need *some* way of determining the content of virtue in order to be able to act rightly. And the *Euthyphro* shows us this, with its constant concern for acting rightly in the here and now. The "What is F?" question is not simply of philosophical interest; finding an answer to it, or replacing it with some other way of determining what the virtuous action is in the here and now, is necessary for any person committed to SV who turns to put that commitment into action. While Socrates' humility in his disavowal has seemed to many readers over the centuries exaggerated if not downright disingenuous, Euthyphro shows the danger of not sharing it. Committed to doing the right thing, certain that it is never right to do wrong or to let a wrongdoer go unpunished, Euthyphro fails to understand that a knowledgeable determination about what is right and wrong must be made before one acts.

[39] Once Euthyphro agrees to this new definition, Socrates asks whether they should examine it to see if it is "well said," a typical enough Socratic comment, but then he takes a few more lines to elaborate an alternative in a way I think quite telling: "Or shall we leave it and shall we in this way accept these [statements] of ours and of others – [that is,] if someone simply *says* that something is in some way [τι ἔχειν οὕτω], we then agree [συγχωροῦντες] that it is. Or should we consider what the speaker is saying?" (9e5–7). Talk of how things are clearly echoes Euthyphro's dogmatic assessment of how things stand in his father's case. See 4a12, 4e2, 4e5, 9b2. In these passages the issue is whether matters stand correctly (ἔχειν ὀρθῶς).

[40] It is not difficult to recognize that Euthyphro's zealous prosecution of his father is a thinly veiled analogy for Meletus' zealous prosecution of Socrates. As Socrates ironically says, since Meletus is prosecuting him for impiety and corrupting the youth, he must therefore know what corrupts the youth and what doesn't, and therefore he must be wise (2c–3a); see Vasiliou (1999a), 468–9. The alternative is that he is doing what Euthyphro is doing: proceeding with a serious action without adequate justification that *what* he is doing is right.

4.4 AIMING AND DETERMINING IN THE *PROTAGORAS* AND *EUTHYDEMUS*

The *Euthydemus* is not generally grouped with the dialogues of definition, for, unlike the case with the *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, or *Laches*, there is no clear "What is F?" question on which it centers. Its explicit focus is protreptic. Socrates and a pair of sophists, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, offer competing arguments and argumentative methods with the aim of "exhorting" (προτρέπειν: see 275a1, 278d2, 282d6) the young boy Cleinias to pursue virtue and philosophy. Socrates has two substantive philosophical discussions with Cleinias, the first of which is explicitly an example of Socrates trying out his protreptic skills. In this protreptic discussion Socrates argues that only wisdom is beneficial, because it alone guarantees the correct use of things (278e–282d).[41] Other apparent goods, like fortitude, wealth, or health, are merely conditional goods insofar as their goodness depends upon their being used properly (i.e., by knowledge). Misused, these "apparent" goods can become downright harmful. This argument clearly leaves important questions unanswered. Let us grant that it successfully establishes that knowledge of how to use other things correctly (ὀρθῶς) is necessary for those things to function as goods. Knowledge then is the state that enables an individual to make correct use of things. But we still have not discovered *what it would be* to use, for example, wealth "correctly." If I want to do what is truly good in the here and now with my wealth, simply knowing that I need to know how to use it correctly, and not misuse it, will not help me to determine what to do. We should not be too surprised at this lack, however, when we recall that the explicit goal of this argument is a protreptic one: to convince the young Cleinias to pursue virtue and wisdom. And judging by Cleinias' enthusiastic response, it seems to do just that (282d2–3); indeed, this is just what Socrates is excellent at according to Cleitophon.

The determining question is addressed in Socrates' second engagement with Cleinias in the *Euthydemus* (288d–292e).[42] Although it does not ask

[41] See also *Meno* 87e–89a. I think that the argument in the *Euthydemus* should not be taken, as it often is, as straightforward evidence of what Socrates (or Plato) thinks about wisdom, goods, and happiness, since it arises in a very particular and charged context: an explicit example of protreptic aimed at turning the young Cleinias towards virtue and philosophy. It is not an investigation into the truth about the nature of wisdom and happiness, but an attempt at conversion, to be contrasted with the methods of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. I cannot argue for this fully here, however.

[42] Gonzalez (2002), 176–7 believes that the second engagement with Cleinias is also a "protreptic" discussion. By contrast, I believe that the second engagement turns to the determining question of what the wisdom is that Cleinias has already been convinced to pursue via the first protreptic argument.

a "What is F?" question, it does seek to determine what the knowledge is which was identified in the first argument. In this second argument Socrates and Cleinias conclude that it is some sort of "royal skill" (βασιλικὴ τέχνη) that will provide us with knowledge of how to use the first-order skills and their products (291b4 ff.). But they (and Crito as well) are not able to specify what that knowledge is of (292e), parallel to the way in which the dialogues of definition fail to find adequate definitions of the virtues.[43] Thus, even in this brief discussion, we can see that the structure of the two arguments in the *Euthydemus* matches the aiming/determining distinction. Moreover the results of the arguments fit with what we would expect from Cleitophon's critique of Socrates: he delivers a successful protreptic speech, convincing Cleinias that virtue and wisdom are most important, but then, when it comes to saying what that wisdom *is*, he utterly fails to answer the determining question. The situation in the *Protagoras*, by contrast, is interestingly different.

The most notorious feature of the *Protagoras* is Socrates' apparent endorsement of hedonism in the final argument (351b ff.). I do not believe that Socrates is a hedonist, not even within the confines of the *Protagoras*.[44] I believe that his use of hedonism is merely ad hominem, and that Plato gives clues to a careful reader to indicate that this is so. I shall not argue for this here, but I am largely sympathetic with the analysis of the argument by Charles Kahn.[45] As I have already discussed in connection with Callicles in chapter three, and will return to in chapters six and eight on the *Republic*, hedonism is a significant position in Plato not only because of the natural

[43] It seems clear to me that the interchange between Socrates and Crito at 290e–291a is meant to indicate that what Socrates reports as said by Cleinias in the second argument – including the claim that the hypotheses of mathematics ought to be handed over to dialecticians (290c) – was not in fact said by him. Crito's incredulity that the boy came up with this makes Socrates say that perhaps he was mistaken and suggests other candidates, including Ctesippus (about whom Crito replies: "Not the Ctesippus I know!") or else some "superior being"; the only thing that Socrates is sure of is that it was *not* Euthydemus or Dionysodorus. Crito responds that he is sure it *was* a superior being – transparently referring to Socrates himself. Gonzalez (2002), 177 thinks that Cleinias himself has already, via protreptic alone, become a dialectician. Reeve (2003), 46 appreciates the humor.

[44] Irwin (1995), 91–2 believes that the hedonism of the *Protagoras* is Plato's defense of the moral theory of the Socratic dialogues; he believes that the historical Socrates most probably did not clearly either accept or reject hedonism. Gosling and Taylor (1982) argue that Socrates' hedonism in the *Protagoras* is compatible with his rejection of hedonism in the *Gorgias* and with his claims about the importance of virtue in the *Apology* and *Crito*. Although rejecting Gosling and Taylor's analysis, Rudebusch (1999) also argues that Socrates is a hedonist and that the various texts are compatible, once one understands that Socrates distinguishes between "modal" and "sensate" pleasure.

[45] See Kahn (1996), 238–43. I am less convinced by Kahn's larger conclusions about the *Protagoras*. Zeyl (1980) is an earlier, well-known, article that makes a strong case for Socrates' hedonism being merely ad hominem; Kahn's view differs in some important ways. A defect of Rudebusch's (1999) account is that it does not address the arguments advanced for the ad hominem interpretation by Zeyl or Kahn.

and obvious effect of pleasure on human lives. If hedonism is true, then determining what right action is will be relatively straightforward: right action will be whatever leads to the maximization of pleasure. If, however, hedonism is *false*, and being virtuous and/or doing virtuous actions is (part of) the supreme aim and ultimate good, then the question of what the virtuous actions are remains outstanding.

The *Protagoras* shows the reader quite clearly how the outstanding determining questions could in principle be solved. The key difference between the hedonist argument in the *Protagoras* and Socrates' arguments in the *Euthydemus* is that, although they both agree that knowledge is of paramount importance, the *Protagoras* argument proceeds on the assumption that what the good *is* has already been determined. The knowledge that is critical to happiness has an object in the *Protagoras*: it is knowledge *of* the measurement of pleasures and pains (357d). In the *Euthydemus* the wisdom is simply wisdom of how to use things "correctly" or "rightly" (ὀρθῶς); it is, further, a knowledge that will make people good (292d) – but in what respect they are good remains undiscovered. In the *Protagoras*, by contrast, the good, and thus right, action is clearly determined: "rightly" means in order to achieve the greatest amount of pleasure overall. The "art of measurement" is not a skill the possession of which enables a person to know *what* the overall good is, any more than knowledge of medicine is what makes a person know that the end of medicine is health; it does not address that question in moral epistemology. Nor is the art of measurement a second-order techne, whose end or product is problematic, as was the case with the "royal skill" of the *Euthydemus*. It is rather a first-order techne, whose end is clear: the maximization of pleasure. What the knowledge of this skill will enable one to do, in contrast to the mere "power of appearance," is to guarantee that one gets acting well in the here and now right, *given that pleasure is truly the good*. It does not help, nor is it concerned with, the question of *whether* pleasure is in fact the real or only the apparent good. The art of measurement provides the answer to the outstanding determining question: what is the right action to do? The art of measurement, however, would be the "salvation of life" (357a6–7) *only* on the assumption that hedonism is true.

The art of measurement of pleasures and pains, which is a first-order craft, *does* prevent the agent from confusing an action that appears to be good (most pleasant) with one that is really good (most pleasant). That this knowledge by itself causes us to *choose* the real good is plausible only when conjoined with the *Protagoras*' psychological hedonism. This first-order techne, the art of measurement, is not a "royal craft" because hedonism

preempts the necessity for such a second-order skill – the special sort of wisdom that cannot be misused. As I noted earlier, the second-order craft arises in the context of there being no substantive picture of what will count as using the first-order crafts, and the other "apparent" goods, correctly. Hedonism solves that problem: things are used correctly when they maximize pleasure. And, as I shall elaborate below, in the context of the *Protagoras* it is assumed that no one would voluntarily act against what is most pleasant. When Socrates denies having techne-knowledge of virtue, what he denies is knowledge of what virtue is in general and of how to determine what the right action is in the here and now.[46] If he were able to answer the Socratic "What is F?" question he would be able to distinguish without error the virtuous from the non-virtuous actions. This is the knowledge that the art of measurement provides on the assumption that hedonism is true. Without this knowledge a person can never know that what she does *is* actually virtuous, even if she is explicitly *aiming* at acting virtuously (i.e., at maximizing pleasure). But this kind of "going wrong" is of course different from cases of weakness of will – a central focus in the hedonist argument. If the good is *not* identical to pleasure, but to virtue, then there are two ways we might "go wrong." One is that we might mistakenly believe that pleasure is the good: when we pursue the pleasant then we are not acting incontinently, we are pursuing what we falsely believe is the good. In addition or alternatively, we may pursue our conception of the good as pleasure (whether or not it is true) *incorrectly* by not doing the actions that would in fact lead us to maximize our pleasure – this would be rectified by the knowledge of the art of measurement. Both of these cases of going wrong would be different from "weakness" cases in which we are acting *against* either what we believe to be our overall good, or what we take to be the good in the here and now.

In chapter one I discussed how the aiming/determining distinction affects our understanding of Socrates' own relationship to incontinence (1.6). The hedonism argument in the *Protagoras* is where Socrates most explicitly denies the possibility that a person could act against knowledge. I cannot fully examine this argument here; I am simply concerned to show how the aiming/determining distinction affects our understanding of it. I shall argue that by appreciating the aiming/determining distinction we can see that Socrates' *argument* for a *general* denial of incontinence depends for its plausibility specifically on the hedonism with which it is conjoined. By

[46] He cannot determine what is virtuous in the here and now *knowledgeably*; he can and does, as we have seen, follow the argument that seems best to him or follow the prohibitions of his divine sign.

"general denial" I mean that Socrates is not merely denying that he himself has ever been incontinent, as I argued he did in the *Apology*, but that the phenomenon itself is impossible.

As far as I can see, nothing in the hedonist argument rules out the possibility that there could be a character who, despite his knowledge that hedonism is true and despite his knowledge that action A is the one that is the most pleasurable via his knowledge of the art of measurement, nevertheless chooses action B because, say, he is overcome by pity.[47] What makes "being overwhelmed by pity" implausible, and so simply not considered one way or the other in the *Protagoras*, is the plausibility for the many of hedonism and in particular of psychological hedonism. If instead the good were something else, for example the accumulation of wealth, then it would not be plausible in the least that mere knowledge of an art of measurement about which actions would in fact make one the wealthiest would by itself ensure that one did not act contrary to that knowledge. As the many believe, it is a very familiar phenomenon for people to be tempted by pleasure to do something contrary to what they think they ought to do. But, as Socrates argues, *if* hedonism is true, then the problem is not with their *aim* but with whether they correctly *determine* which action, in fact, yields the most pleasure (factoring in the pleasurable and painful effects of delayed gratification and so on: see 356a–c); this is where the art of measurement would guarantee the right answer. By contrast it would be a very unusual circumstance for a person to have a "weakness" for fairness or pity contrary to what would truly be most pleasurable for him. But it would only be *impossible*, as opposed to merely unusual, if psychological hedonism were true. Thus, nothing in the argument rules out incontinence in general, understood as acting against what one knows to be best. For a person who was overcome by pity to act generously, despite the fact that it is less pleasant for him and he knows it is, would be to display (a kind of) incontinence. Such incontinence is only rendered implausible given the alleged truth of ethical and psychological hedonism – positions that, in the *Protagoras* at least, the many do not question. Likewise, for someone who is unwaveringly committed to SV, as Socrates himself claims to have been throughout his life, all that remains to guarantee virtuous action is the correct determination of which action is the virtuous one. In the *Protagoras* Socrates argues similarly: if one should be and is unwaveringly committed

[47] We might also think of Callicles' extolling of the virtue of courage in pursuing one's appetites without regret and in rejecting conventional calls to justice or temperance; a convinced Calliclean, then, might be persuaded that he ought to gratify his appetites as much as possible, but, overcome by conventional social pressure, nevertheless act "incontinently."

to doing what is most pleasant, all that is needed to guarantee correct action is the correct identification of which action truly yields the most pleasure.

Thus the *Protagoras* shows how the adoption of hedonism renders the problematic determining question much more manageable. If the supreme aim is not virtuous action or being virtuous as such but pleasure, then the virtuous action becomes identical to the most pleasurable action. A successful life, then, will result from determining what is most pleasurable not on the basis of the "power of appearance," but by possession of a craft of measurement of pleasures and pains. Outside of the *Protagoras*, where hedonism is rejected as it is in the *Gorgias*, the supreme aim remains virtue, whose content is once again a mystery. When Socrates says at the end of the *Protagoras* that he sees "distinctly that all these things are terribly scattered upside down (πάντα ταῦτα καθορῶν ἄνω κάτω ταραττόμενα δεινῶς)" (361c2–3), I take him at his word. If hedonism is rejected, he truly does not know what virtue is, and until he does, he will not be able to determine what the virtuous action is.

CHAPTER 5

Socrates and Thrasymachus: Republic *1*

It is difficult not to read almost all of Plato's dialogues either as preludes to the *Republic*, or as subsequent comments and reflections on it. I shall discuss aspects of the *Republic* on the assumption that one has read the dialogues we have previously discussed. As I have said, I do not assume that all of these must have been composed before the *Republic*; but I shall discuss how the positions presented in the *Republic* might usefully be understood in relation to views in those dialogues. As a device of convenience, I shall refer to the dialogues we have already discussed as "earlier," without that committing me to a view about their relative date of composition. Perhaps, as some commentators argue, the *Republic* represents a new phase in Plato's philosophical thinking; perhaps, as others claim, many of its views are hinted at in other works which play a more propaedeutic role.[1] With regard to the topics that I am focused on, I shall argue that the *Republic* elaborates views we have seen in the other dialogues in ways that are more detailed but nevertheless consistent with what we have found so far.

In this chapter I shall show that Plato has Socrates and the interlocutors in Book 1 move back and forth between debating the aiming principle SV and arguing about determining questions about just actions. Keeping the aiming/determining distinction in mind will help to explain and give order to the bewildering and rapid switching of interlocutors and, apparently, topics. As we shall see in chapters six through eight, most scholars understand the main body of the *Republic* as rejecting any attempt to define just actions and replacing this issue with the question of what it is to be a just person. I have argued in chapter four that such a strategy will not help with outstanding determining questions. Although I agree that the *Republic* will provide the most detailed account we have seen for what it is to be a just person, I shall argue that this is meant to address the challenge of why we ought to be just, but not to count as *the* answer to the question of what

[1] Irwin (1995) is a well-known example of the former; Kahn (1996) of the latter.

justice is; for it provides no way of determining what just actions are and, we shall see, this is necessary if we even want to *be* just. Here in *Republic* 1 we shall see that Plato sets the groundwork for distinguishing aiming questions from determining questions.

5.1 SOCRATES, CEPHALUS, AND POLEMARCHUS

Commentators argue about the merits and faults of Cephalus and Polemarchus, Socrates' first two interlocutors in Book 1.[2] The Socrates we find in *Republic* 1, however, appears quite familiar. He does not seek out the conversation; it seems simply to happen by chance. He and Glaucon are waylaid by Polemarchus, Adeimantus, and others. In a brief interchange (327c), Polemarchus says that Socrates and Glaucon must stay with them, rather than continue back to Athens, given "how many we are." When Socrates asks whether, despite their overwhelming strength, he might not persuade them to "let us [him and Glaucon] go," Polemarchus responds by asking Socrates whether he could "persuade someone who did not listen." When Glaucon says that there would be no way one could, Polemarchus says that he and Socrates should keep in mind then that they are not listening (ὡς τοίνυν μὴ ἀκουσομένων, οὕτω διανοεῖσθε, 327c14).[3]

Near the end of Socrates' conversation with the elderly Cephalus, he rather suddenly seizes on Cephalus' exposition of the worth of living a just life and raises the "What is F?" question about justice: is it correct to say that speaking the truth and paying one's debts are "without qualification" (ἁπλῶς) what justice is, or are there not clearly counterexamples, such as returning borrowed weapons to a person who has gone mad (331c1–8)? Socrates seems a bit overeager. He takes the apparently friendly remarks of an old man about how best to handle old age, restates them as a potential answer to a Socratic "What is F?" question, and supplies refuting counterexamples in the space of about eight lines. Even if Cephalus is at best morally complacent and so in dire need of the philosophical critique Socrates supplies,[4] it remains true that Socrates moves quite suddenly from an ordinary conversation to a completed mini-elenchus. If Socrates' goal is to persuade

[2] See the differing views of Annas (1981), 18–34, Beversluis (2000), chs. 10–11, Irwin (1995), §118, and Reeve (1988), 5–9. Gifford (2001) is the most thorough treatment of the relation between the historical lives of Cephalus and Polemarchus (which a reader/hearer of the *Republic* could be expected to know) and Plato's philosophical aims. He argues, to my mind conclusively, that Cephalus and Polemarchus are presented in an extremely negative light.

[3] I remind the reader that I am using Slings' (2003) text, the line numbers of which vary slightly from Burnet's edition.

[4] As Annas (1981), 18–22 believes, and Gifford (2001) establishes.

Cephalus to move away from complacency and to think more critically about his views on justice and the best life, he completely fails;[5] Cephalus quickly becomes the first example of someone who is not going to be persuaded because he will not listen.[6] Although Cephalus has extolled the pleasures of conversation in his old age (328d2–5), Socrates' quick refutation of an elicited definition results in his walking away entirely, leaving the conversation to Polemarchus.[7]

We ought to notice further that the "definition" Socrates attributes to Cephalus would count as a possible answer to the "What is F?" question in the dialogues of definition, and, if it were correct, it would provide us with a way of discriminating between just and unjust actions. As we have seen, however, Socrates immediately shows that the definition is too broad, given the existence of cases where it would obviously be unjust to speak the truth or return what is owed. When Polemarchus takes over, then, the conversation concerns an attempt to discover how to discriminate just *actions*.

Polemarchus claims that Simonides would insist on the truth of the definition extracted from Cephalus. When Socrates asks him to say what Simonides said "correctly" (ὀρθῶς, 331e2), Polemarchus simply repeats that Simonides said "finely" (καλῶς) that what is just is giving to each person what is owed to him (331e3–4). As stated so far Polemarchus' definition is susceptible to exactly the same counterexample Socrates has just employed against Cephalus; he has merely added the authority of Simonides. Indeed, after some polite words about "wise and godlike" Simonides, Socrates proceeds to repeat the same counterexample step by step: a person ought not to return weapons to someone who is mad, even though, since the madman did lend the weapons in the first place, it would be right to say they are "owed" to him. Thus justice cannot be "giving a person what is

[5] Notwithstanding Gifford's (2001), 73 claim that Socrates is "well within his rights" to question Cephalus as he does. Gifford, sensitive to what I have called the "outer frame," is correct to ask, at 81 n. 63 and §8, why *Plato* has Socrates let Cephalus go so quickly.

[6] And perhaps the most extreme insofar as Cephalus leaves the conversation entirely and goes off to conduct a sacrifice. Thrasymachus, although obviously much more aggressive and willing to engage with Socrates in argument, and despite the facts that he gets up to leave at one point (344d) and is certainly not persuaded by Socrates at the end of Book 1, nevertheless remains and listens to the rest of the conversation of the *Republic*. He even speaks again at the beginning of Book 5 (450a) to encourage Socrates enthusiastically to complete his account, his earlier hostility towards Socrates having apparently subsided.

[7] Given Gifford's (2001), 52–80 thorough criticism of Cephalus' character, we might see the fact that he enters into the conversation from having made a sacrifice and leaves it to engage in further rites as foreshadowing Adeimantus' lengthy description in Book 2 of how most people believe that punishment from the gods for injustices can be bought off by expensive and elaborate sacrifices.

owed to him" (331e7–332a6). Before we look at Polemarchus' elaboration of Simonides' claim, I think we should note how Plato has had Socrates *twice* detail this particular counterexample. It is the first philosophical argument in the *Republic*. Its prominent position and its repetition place the puzzle it raises front and center in the dialogue. It succinctly emphasizes the problem of determining what the just action is, which we are familiar with from the other dialogues. It reminds a reader of the dialogues of definition of how difficult it is to give an account of what the right or virtuous action is that can cover all cases. If Socrates rejects a definition as plausible as "returning what is owed" on the strength of the counterexample of a person who is mad, it suggests that a general answer to determining questions may be impossible to come by, which leaves us with a problem about how determinations in the here and now are to be made properly, that is, how they could be made on the basis of knowing what justice or virtue is. Any adequate account of the body of the *Republic* ought to explain how this problem is either solved or else shown to be not as urgent as it appears. I shall take this up in chapters seven and eight.

Polemarchus then claims that what Simonides means is that one ought to give to friends and enemies what is "owed" to them, which is equivalent to what is "fitting" (τὸ προσῆκον) for them: to friends what is owed is something good (332a9–10), to enemies something bad (332b7–8).[8] Socrates quickly gets Polemarchus to agree that justice is the techne that provides "benefits to friends and harms to enemies" (τοῖς φίλοις τε καὶ ἐχθροῖς ὠφελίας τε καὶ βλάβας, 332d5–6) and that what this amounts to is the idea that justice is "doing well" (εὖ ποιεῖν) for friends and doing "evil" (κακῶς) to enemies. If we recall *Crito* 49c, however, we know that Socrates believes that it is never right to do wrong (κακουργεῖν), to do injustice (ἀδικεῖν), or to do evil (κακῶς ποιεῖν), all of which are equivalent expressions for violating SV. Indeed "it is never right to do wrong" is the expression of SV as a limiting condition.[9] What began then as an attempt to answer the determining question of what just action is has now transformed into an aiming question about whether it is ever right "to do evil." They are no longer trying to say what all just or unjust, right or wrong, actions have in common. In the earlier dialogues we saw that Socrates is much more epistemologically positive and argumentatively constructive on the topic of SV. In the *Crito* and *Gorgias* Socrates holds that it is never right to do

[8] See Gifford (2001), 88–91 for the irony of this definition given Polemarchus' historical fate.

[9] See Introduction.

wrong and that one should never harm anyone. We learned further, at the end of the argument with Polus, that *if* one were "to do evil" to someone, he should let them get away with all of their injustices without ever paying any penalty (*Gor.* 481a5–481b1). We saw that Socrates is concerned with harm and benefit to one's soul as such, independently of the effects that actions might have on one's body or possessions. This was a central issue in the discussions with Polus and Callicles, as we saw in chapter three.

In a condensed, rapid-fire form, almost as though he were bored, Socrates proceeds to raise the same question here: "Does it belong to the just man to harm anyone at all?" (335b2–3). He is setting the stage for establishing SV, in a formulation familiar from the *Crito*. He will conclude by the end of the argument that it has seemed to them that "it is never the case that a just person should harm anyone" (335e5–6).

The argument proceeds in two parts and may be summarized as follows (335b–e):

An argument about harm:

(1) The virtue of a thing makes the thing good, and a good thing.
(2) When something is harmed it becomes worse in the virtue that makes it a good thing.
(3) If human beings are harmed, they become worse in human virtue.
(4) Justice is (a) human virtue.
(5) So people who are harmed become more unjust.

Then a "function" (ἔργον) argument:

(A) It is not the function (ἔργον) of one property to produce its opposite.
(B) So it is not the function of goodness to harm, but its opposite.
(C) A just person is good.
(D) So, a just person doesn't harm anyone, that is, from the argument about harm, doesn't make anyone more unjust.

This argument leaves much to be desired.[10] I need only emphasize here that to say that a good person would never want to make anyone worse in human virtue does *not* mean that a good person would not kill someone, physically injure them, or deprive them of something, and so on, as we learned from our study of the *Crito* in chapter two. We must be careful not to "moralize." Socrates has done what he typically does in the dialogues of definition. Beginning with an answer that would, were it true, enable them to determine which actions are virtuous and which are not, he moves the discussion, in the face of counterexamples, to consider instead either an

[10] See Beversluis (2000), 215–16, who cites additional scholars.

aiming principle or a claim about what it is to *be* virtuous. (3) is a crucial step. There Socrates implicitly restricts harm and benefit to harm and benefit *for* the soul. What harm is is harm to human excellence. If justice is an excellence,[11] then to deprive a person of justice is to harm her. Socrates, however, makes an even stronger claim than this (335c1–2). He states that, if a person is harmed, then she is made worse with respect to human virtue. As many commentators have noticed, this assumption is controversial, at best.[12] It may be controversial, but it is certainly familiar. As we saw in chapter one, Socrates claims in the *Apology* that a better person cannot be harmed (βλάπτεσθαι) by a worse and so concludes that, even if Anytus and Meletus kill him or deprive him of all of his property, they will not thereby be harming him in the strictest sense (30c8–d5).[13] What makes this more than just madness are Socrates' beliefs, discussed in the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Gorgias*, that the body and soul are each an independent locus of harm and benefit, and that the value of the well-being of the soul is incomparable with any harm or benefit to the body or to one's material possessions. Strikingly, Socrates does not introduce any premises about soul and body here in *Republic* 1. And it is most probably correct to think that Polemarchus, with his entirely conventional views, would be at best hazy on the Socratic idea that virtue and vice benefit and harm the soul as such, independently of their effects on the body or on one's possessions. Nevertheless a reader of the earlier dialogues ought to recognize the familiar Socratic idea of SV and the premises upon which it has rested in those works. This sets the stage for the challenge of Thrasymachus and Glaucon's and Adeimantus' restatement of that challenge in Book 2, where the idea that real harm to a person consists in harm to that person's soul will be explored in detail.

Before we leave Polemarchus behind it is worth considering what Socrates concludes from his discussion with him. At 336a, Socrates takes himself to have established that it is true that a just man would not harm anyone. On this basis he decides that neither Simonides nor any other "wise and blessed" person could have said otherwise, for then a wise person would have said something false. He then turns back to the question of what justice could be, when Thrasymachus interrupts (336a9–10). Socrates seems utterly

[11] It need not be identical to virtue; it might be simply necessary for virtue.

[12] For example, see Annas (1981), 32–4; Irwin (1995), 172.

[13] "In the strictest sense" is, as we have seen, the sense he wants to emphasize in the *Apology* as supremely important: harm (and benefit) to the soul. At *Gor.* 469c1–2 it is clear that Socrates considers suffering injustice (which is most often suffering a harm to one's body or a loss of one's "possessions") undesirable; it is nevertheless of a value that is incomparable to the harm done to one's soul by doing injustice.

content to have shown that a just person does not harm anyone, while still being at a loss about how to determine which actions *are* just. This is in keeping with the distinction that we have seen throughout the dialogues between the aiming principle SV and questions about how to determine what the virtuous action is.

We should note, finally, that thus far *Republic* 1 is somewhat different from the *Euthyphro*, *Laches*, and *Charmides* insofar as aiming principles are not debated in those dialogues. There are only attempted definitions of virtues that pertain either to virtuous actions or to virtuous persons. By contrast, the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Gorgias* carefully avoid "What is F?" questions about virtue, focusing instead on statements and defenses of SV. Here in *Republic* 1, even in the first interchanges with Cephalus and Polemarchus, we see Socrates move from attempting to answer a "What is F?" question about just action, to establishing that a good person would never harm (i.e., do wrong to) anyone. This foreshadows the complex interplay to follow between aiming and determining questions. We shall see in the rest of this chapter that the Thrasymachus episode treats the two issues separately, and in subsequent chapters that the rest of the *Republic* follows suit.

5.2 THRASYMACHUS' INITIAL ACCOUNT OF JUSTICE

Socrates' conversation with Thrasymachus is one of the better-discussed parts of the *Republic*. There is still, however, substantial disagreement about how to understand Thrasymachus' own position.[14] There is consensus that Socrates' arguments are inadequate, although one might wonder whether this negative assessment is more easily reached given the subsequent nine books of the *Republic* that, in some way, restate the challenge and offer new responses. If all we had was *Republic* 1, perhaps we would be inclined to take it more seriously on its own terms. Be that as it may, I shall not attempt a thorough treatment here. Rather, I examine Socrates' arguments with Thrasymachus in light of the distinction between the aiming principle SV and the determination of what virtue is. We have already seen Socrates move from a determining question to the establishment of an aiming principle in his argument with Polemarchus. When Thrasymachus breaks into the conversation, Socrates seemed about to go back to the determining question "What is justice?"

[14] See, as a selection, Annas (1981), ch. 2; Barney (2004); Beversluis (2000), ch. 11; Chappell (1993); Everson (1998a) with Chappell's (2000) response; Henderson (1970); Hourani (1962); Irwin (1995), ch. 11; Kerferd (1947) and (1981); Reeve (1988), ch. 1.

After some aggressive remarks and taunts, Thrasymachus is prepared to offer his own answer. He is being deliberately provocative when he states that he has a good answer to what justice is. He claims that it is "the advantage of the superior" (τοῦ κρείττονος) and then immediately asks Socrates to "praise him" (338c2–4).[15] His call for praise is rather disingenuous, because he knows full well that he has not said anything that is clear yet. Thrasymachus is engaging in a familiar rhetorical trick: state the surprising conclusion of an argument as though it were obvious, and then, in a way that insults one's listener, pretend that the explanation should have been obvious to anyone with any sense. It is a way, common enough in philosophical discussions past and present, of trying to show that you are cleverer than your listener. In fact, here it succeeds to a certain extent insofar as 338d is the only time that Thrasymachus is able to ask the questions and have Socrates answer, which is something Thrasymachus is clearly ready to do to explain the conclusion he has pretended is obvious, but which he clearly thinks of as sophisticated.[16]

After Socrates has spurred Thrasymachus to insult him by suggesting that "superior" in Thrasymachus' answer means simply "physically stronger," he asks Thrasymachus to say more clearly what he means.[17] Without any further prompting from Socrates, Thrasymachus introduces what he presumably takes to be empirical facts: different cities have different types of governance and the ruler or leadership is the superior element in the city. More controversially he also assumes that the ruler in any type of government makes laws that are advantageous for that ruler. So, according to Thrasymachus, the laws that have been established in a democracy are

[15] I am here expanding on a point that Everson (1998a), 102 makes and attributes in part to Sidgwick.

[16] Thrasymachus tries once more (343a) to grab the reins of questioner from Socrates by interrupting with an insult about Socrates' needing a wet nurse for his snotty nose. Socrates retorts that Thrasymachus ought to stick to answering his questions rather than asking them. This does enable Thrasymachus to get in his "immoralist speech" (343b ff.). But other than this, Socrates remains the questioner throughout after 338d.

[17] The more traditional translation is "advantage of the *stronger*." While it is entirely correct, a shortcoming of this translation is that "the stronger" is frequently understood to refer to physical strength. Although κρείττων can mean physically stronger (as Socrates exploits), it can also mean morally better or superior in character. "Superior" nicely leaves open the relevant respect of superiority (cp. Aristotle *NE* 1177b26–27). At 338c, Socrates provokes abuse from Thrasymachus, who calls him βδελυρός for suggesting that κρείττων simply means being physically stronger. Correspondingly Socrates and Callicles argue about the intended sense of this word at *Gorgias* 488b ff. (see chapter three). Callicles too abuses Socrates when he makes the same point against him, insulted that Socrates could interpret "superior," which Thrasymachus and Callicles both clearly intend to carry the sense of being a superior human being, in a debased way that refers to mere physical strength. The issue is that if superior does not refer to superior strength, which would be a clear, easily determinable type of superiority, Socrates wants to know precisely in what respect Thrasymachus' and Callicles' superior man *is* superior.

for the advantage of the rulers of the democracy, the laws in a tyranny for the advantage of the ruler of the tyranny, the tyrant. Since in each case we assume that the ruler "is superior,"[18] then following the laws is to the advantage of the stronger. The last premise needed[19] is that it is just to obey the rulers, which is to be understood as claiming that it is just *for those ruled* (τοῖς ἀρχομένοις, see 338e4, 339c10) to follow the laws instituted by the rulers for their own advantage.

This leads to the question of how we ought to understand Thrasymachus' two initial claims: that justice is "the advantage of the superior" and that justice is "for the subjects to follow the laws instituted by the rulers." On my view, his first response is purposefully shocking, and represents what he takes to be a sophisticated understanding of a naïve person's conception of justice. What justice really is for Thrasymachus, at least at this stage of the discussion, is simply determined by the laws of any city. Thrasymachus starts, at least, as a conventionalist.[20] Justice is following the established laws. What Thrasymachus thinks is his clever insight is that the laws of the city are simply put in place for the advantage of the rulers. And as such, the laws do not, for example, follow from some wisdom about the true nature of justice, as some naïve person (like Socrates) might think. Thrasymachus shows here some similarity with Callicles insofar as each takes himself to be more sophisticated than ordinary folk. They have each seen through the sham that is ordinary justice.[21] While most people might think that there is something more to justice than obeying laws for the advantage of those who rule, something that is in some way significant or valuable about acting justly and obeying the laws, that is in reality untrue; it is really nothing more than the advantage of the stronger.

Therefore, if we think about Thrasymachus' first reply here as an answer to a Socratic "What is F?" question, his answer to that question is that what

[18] This might be more easily assumed in Greek, since Thrasymachus asks whether the ruler κρατεῖ in each city, using a verb cognate with κρείττων. κρατεῖ can mean "is stronger," or "is ruler/master of." Chappell (1993), 3 sees no reason to concede this point to Thrasymachus.

[19] As Everson (1998a), 102 points out.

[20] Beversluis (2000), 227–8 insists that Thrasymachus intends "justice is the advantage of the stronger" (as Beversluis translates) as an identity statement, which provides the essence of justice. He does not explain how it fits with Thrasymachus' strong affirmative ("of course") to the following question: "But whatever they [the rulers] enact must be done by their subjects, *and this is justice* [καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ δίκαιον]" (339c10–11). This occurs after Thrasymachus has easily agreed that rulers sometimes err, and I agree with Everson (1998a), 123 that it establishes, at this point at least, that Thrasymachus agrees to conventionalism. The language strongly suggests, as I argue above, that Thrasymachus takes this to be what justice is. Chappell (2000), 105–6 disagrees. Annas (1981), Barney (2004), Kerferd (1947) all deny that Thrasymachus maintains conventionalism. Hourani (1962) believes he accepts it.

[21] What Callicles calls justice "by convention."

is just is to follow the laws. That is, what all just actions have in common is that they are legal, and it is their being legal that explains why they are just; there is no other explanation. If it were true, such thoroughgoing conventionalism would successfully answer the "What is F?" question. Socrates could look at an action, determine whether it was lawful or not, and thereby know whether and why it was just or not. Such an account of justice would give a way of answering determining questions about justice. This is an important and recurring feature of conventionalism that seems to make it attractive.[22] Like Callicles' account of virtue and happiness consisting in appetite gratification, it suggests that determining questions may be answered relatively simply by appeal to laws or occurrent desires. There is nothing more to virtue or justice than that. One of Euthyphro's definitions generates a similar situation: if Euthyphro had agreed that what was pious is pious because the gods loved it, and not the other way around, then the gods' attitude would determine and explain what is pious and what is not (*Eu.* 10d).

5.3 Thrasymachus' "definitions" of justice

But should we think of Thrasymachus' "accounts" of justice so far, and the ones to follow, as so much as attempting to supply a Socratic definition of justice? In the course of criticizing Stephen Everson, T. D. J. Chappell argues that Thrasymachus ought not to be understood as having any sophisticated ideas about the nature of definition such as, for example, providing necessary and sufficient conditions or a property-identity.[23] He approvingly quotes the following sentence from Everson: "There is no reason to think that Thrasymachus is supposed to have any considered views about what formal properties a definition should have."[24] Chappell says that there is no textual evidence to think otherwise. And what is more, Socratic and Platonic requirements for definition were exceptional at the time and so there would be no reason to expect that an ordinary, intelligent Athenian would subscribe to them.[25] For these reasons, Chappell concludes, the most we

[22] In reality matters are more complex insofar as actual Athenian law is "open-textured" and so does not settle determining questions simply and conclusively; see Harris (2000) for discussion. Nevertheless conventionalism at least provides some account of what justice is.

[23] Chappell (2000).

[24] Everson (1998a), 104, quoted by Chappell (2000), 102–3. Chappell proceeds to accuse Everson of unjustifiably and surreptitiously attributing more robust conceptions of definition to Thrasymachus, from which Everson eventually concludes that Thrasymachus' account of justice is incoherent. Chappell thinks that, if we don't attribute such unjustified assumptions about definition to Thrasymachus, then his position ceases to be incoherent.

[25] Chappell (2000), 104–6.

ought to say about Thrasymachus' "definitions" of justice is the following: "a Thrasymachean definition of x is merely some remark about x that gives us 'an understanding of the nature of x': it is a remark that indicates a *diagnostic* property of x, a property that shows what x is 'really all about', rather than a formal specification of a property identity between x and something else." What is a diagnostic property exactly? Chappell offers the following examples: "(B) that some people are unjust in a sense of 'injustice' that has nothing to do with the legalistic definition of justice" and "(C) *As things are*, just actions are *typically* in accordance with (perhaps required by) the laws of the state, and unjust actions are *typically* violations of those laws" (his emphases).[26]

Chappell is certainly right that Thrasymachus never explains what he believes constitutes an adequate definition. It is true as well that Socrates' demand for definitions is not something an ordinary Athenian would be familiar with, as the dialogues depict many times. But Thrasymachus is not as ordinary and naïve about definition as Chappell suggests. First, his entrance into the conversation makes clear that he knows, or at least knows about, Socrates.[27] Thrasymachus has already told the others present that Socrates would engage in his "usual irony" and that he would refuse to answer questions (337a). Thrasymachus' complaint about Socrates is in fact that he has not said anything about justice "clearly and precisely" (336d3). So, although Thrasymachus' own responses will turn out not to be as "clear and precise" as he may hope, these facts show that he is concerned with providing a more determinate answer to what justice is than Socrates has by simply calling it beneficial and so on.[28] More importantly, however, Thrasymachus has obviously just witnessed Socrates' conversation with Cephalus and Polemarchus. And although Socrates never provides a description of what he seeks in a definition in *Republic* 1 as he does elsewhere (e.g., *Eu.* 6d–e, *Meno* 72b–73c), it is nevertheless clear that he seeks a statement of what all just actions have in common; for this was why "returning what is

[26] Chappell (2000), 105. Chappell's point against Everson is that there is nothing contradictory or incoherent about these two claims. Such an interpretation of Thrasymachus' definitions, as observations and descriptions of what justice is like ("dazzling one-liners") and not as definitions of justice in a stricter sense, is in keeping with the views about Thrasymachus that Chappell defends in an earlier article, Chappell (1993).

[27] Has Thrasymachus met or talked to Socrates before? I don't think the evidence is clear. Socrates talks about Thrasymachus' speaking ability in the *Phaedrus* (267c–d), and when Socrates arrives at Polemarchus' house he acknowledges Thrasymachus' presence as someone familiar to him.

[28] The list at 336d1–2 of unclear and imprecise terms that Thrasymachus wishes to disallow includes more terms than Socrates has used up until that point, which might indicate Thrasymachus' acquaintance with other Socratic accounts or conversations.

owed and speaking the truth" failed as a definition of justice (331c–d, 331e–332a). This makes it overwhelmingly unlikely that Chappell's (B) or (C), which offer "for the most part" descriptions of justice, could be the correct interpretation of Thrasymachus' claims. It is true that Thrasymachus need not have in mind supplying necessary and sufficient conditions or property-identities, but there is textual evidence that he understands (and never disagrees with) Socrates' demand that he state something common to all instances of justice. The fact that Thrasymachus believes that he has a much better answer to what justice is than "speaking the truth and returning what is owed" only makes sense if we assume that he believes that his answers will apply to *all* cases of just action and so will not be simply "typically" true and therefore refutable by Socratic counterexamples. This explains why he says things like "justice is nothing other than the advantage of the superior" (338c2–3) and that it is "the same everywhere" (339a2–4). Thrasymachus is, at least at the start, willing and eager to play the Socratic game as he understands it – to state what it is that all instances of justice have in common – because he thinks he can beat Socrates at it.

So, I think that we ought to expect from Thrasymachus' answers properties that he takes to be common to all instances of justice. We should not expect, however, a clear distinction between an essential property of justice and mere "necessary accidents," to borrow a phrase from Aristotle. In fact, I think that it is most plausible to see Thrasymachus as supplying both in his remarks so far. Following the rule of the established government, which he takes to be the stronger, is what justice is. The sophisticated ideological analysis offers us insight into a feature of all actions proclaimed by the rulers to be just in a society: they are to the rulers' advantage. When Thrasymachus says that justice is the "advantage of the stronger" he is not, at this point, offering this as a definition of what *makes* an action just, but supplying an allegedly sophisticated description of it. He does the same later when he avoids calling justice a "vice" but only "very noble naïvety" (πάνυ γενναίαν εὐήθειαν, 348c12). "Noble" is certainly sarcastic; Thrasymachus is thinking of a person who falsely believes that he is acting nobly by acting justly, when in reality he is simply the dupe of a ruler. It is not, however, an action's being to the advantage of the ruler/stronger that *makes* it just; what makes it just is that it is lawful. Thrasymachus is simply pointing out that laws are made for the advantage of the stronger, so that acting justly (which is really acting according to laws) is also "noble naïvety." Thus, although according to Thrasymachus all just actions are both simplistic foolishness and to the advantage of the ruler, these are, in the terms

of the *Euthyphro* (see 11a), simply "affections" (πάθη) of justice, not its essence.[29]

I have argued, then, that until 339d Thrasymachus' remarks about justice, that it is the advantage of the stronger, the advantage of the rulers, and that it is the following of laws by the ruled, are all part of the same package. The last, brought up by Socrates to complete the argument, is by Socratic lights the account of justice; the other two are part of Thrasymachus' allegedly sly ideological insight into ordinary justice and its real beneficiaries.

5.4 Cleitophon's recommendation

Although Socrates says that he is in doubt not about whether justice is a kind of advantage but about whether it is an advantage *of the superior* (339b4–7), what he relies on to generate a conflict in Thrasymachus' views is the latter's admission that a ruler might err about what is truly to his advantage. If Thrasymachus believes both that justice is obedience to the laws instituted by the rulers and that it is possible for the rulers to err about what is really to their advantage, then someone who followed the laws might be acting justly according to the conventionalist criterion for just action, but also unjustly since she is not really acting in a way advantageous to the superior/rulers. Socrates points out that therefore the same act could be just insofar as it follows the rules or laws, but also unjust insofar as it is not really to the advantage of the rulers (339d1–3, 339e1–8). So, Thrasymachus cannot consistently simultaneously hold that (a) justice is obedience to the laws instituted by the rulers, (b) justice is the advantage of the superior/rulers, and (c) rulers sometimes make mistakes about what is to their advantage.

This argument triggers a brief interlude between Cleitophon and Polemarchus, before Thrasymachus returns to the argument (340a–c). Polemarchus compliments Socrates' clarity in eliciting a contradiction in Thrasymachus' statements. Defending Thrasymachus, Cleitophon claims that there is no inconsistency. For he maintains that Thrasymachus said

[29] As an analogy we might think of someone asking, "What are religious acts?" and receiving the response, "Silly superstitions." Here the respondent takes a superior attitude, which he justifies by an alleged insight into what underlies such acts. He is offering something he takes all religious acts to have in common. But he is not thereby explaining what makes an act religious; nor does he take himself to be doing so. In that respect he is not offering a Socratic definition, but rather an ideological analysis. Just as such a response would be provocative and potentially shocking to a person of faith, Socrates is clearly a "believer" in justice, as he has already shown in his conversation with Polemarchus. Thrasymachus intends to be shocking in the same way to a believer in the value of justice, namely, to Socrates. Thrasymachus' superior tone is explainable as well: it is one thing to argue against someone's belief, but another to claim to know why the person really holds that belief.

that "the advantage of the superior is that which the superior person *believes* [ἡγοῖτο] is to his advantage; this is what the weaker person must do, and this is what he [Thrasymachus] posited as the just" (340b6–8). What Cleitophon is offering Thrasymachus is to combine his conventionalism with a subjectivism about advantage, where that is the view that what a person *thinks* is to her advantage *is* to her advantage.

We recognize, as Cleitophon does, that being a subjectivist about harm and benefit would render Thrasymachus' statements consistent; he would be able to maintain both that just actions are (believed to be) to the advantage of the superior/ruler and that just actions are following the orders/laws of the rulers. If he accepted Cleitophon's suggestion, then justice would be completely determined by the laws of the city, which (by the way) the rulers institute for what they take to be their own advantage. Their being liable to error would be neither here nor there, since justice is following *whatever* laws the rulers institute, believing them to be to their advantage. Before we consider why Thrasymachus rejects this emendation to his position, we should ask why Cleitophon proposes it, and why he goes so far as to suggest that it is what Thrasymachus has been saying all along.[30]

We recall that Cleitophon in the eponymous dialogue praises Socrates for his ability to convince a person that one ought to aim at virtue, while he criticizes his failure to determine what virtue is. Let us suppose that the Cleitophon of the *Republic* and that of the *Cleitophon* hold the same position. If this is so, we can see why Cleitophon is attracted to thoroughgoing conventionalism combined with subjectivism about advantage, given his frustration in the *Cleitophon* at Socrates' inability to answer determining questions. What makes such a conventionalism so attractive, relative to the frustration Cleitophon expresses in the other work, is that it provides one with an answer to what virtue (in this case, justice) is. If justice is following whatever the rulers establish as laws, then, in order to know what the just action is in any society, one simply looks at the laws.

Thrasymachus vehemently rejects Socrates' offer to accept Cleitophon's subjectivism about advantage (340c6–7); he is an "objectivist" about advantage and disadvantage (harm and benefit) (340e4–341a4). Thrasymachus argues that a craftsman never errs qua craftsman. If a person errs, then, at

[30] Thrasymachus did not say exactly what Cleitophon says he did: that justice is what a ruler *believes* is to his advantage, rather than what is. But I agree with Everson (1998a), 123 that 338c–339c initially commits Thrasymachus to conventionalism insofar as he has agreed that following the laws of a city, whatever they may be, is just, notwithstanding the fact that they were instituted by rulers explicitly acknowledged to be fallible.

least while he errs, he is not exercising his craft. Thrasymachus distinguishes between rulers and Rulers, and by implication laws and Laws.[31] A Ruler, unlike a ruler, always institutes Laws, where Laws are those laws that are truly to the advantage of the ruler. So a ruler who errs cannot be, while he is erring, a true Ruler, since a Ruler never makes mistakes about what is really to his advantage (340d–341a). When Thrasymachus will not accept that justice is simply what the rulers *believe* is in their interest, but what *really* is, he rejects subjectivism about advantage. The nature of true advantage, and so the nature of what is truly just, will not be exhausted by the attitudes of the rulers manifested in the laws that they actually decree. It will rest rather in the laws that they *ought* to decree. Thrasymachus has thus placed restrictions on what constitutes a real ruler and what constitutes a real law. Conventionalism may continue to be true in a sense (insofar as justice will be following the Laws), but what are going to count as rules or laws and who are going to count as rulers are now subject to further restrictions: only those who are correct about which laws are to their advantage are actually Rulers. And then we are back to the problem of determining content, which so exasperates Cleitophon in the short dialogue. We recall that at the end of the *Cleitophon* he threatens to abandon Socrates and go to Thrasymachus instead, who offers an account of what virtue is (although Cleitophon does not say what Thrasymachus' account is). Here in the *Republic* perhaps we can see what Cleitophon *thought* it was, and why it appeared to him to be satisfying. We can imagine that Cleitophon, after Thrasymachus rejects his suggestion, ends up frustrated by him as well. Indeed, we hear no more from Cleitophon after this.[32]

Why does Thrasymachus reject Cleitophon's suggestion so completely and quickly? I think that what bothers Thrasymachus is similar to what bothers Callicles, which underlies a deeper similarity between them and Socrates. A thoroughgoing conventionalism, like an unrestrained hedonism, is entirely subjective. The advantage of these positions is that they make the questions "What is virtue?" and "What is justice?" relatively easily answerable. But Callicles' and Thrasymachus' elitism is at odds with such a thoroughly subjectivist position. They think that some sophisticated people (and they clearly include themselves in this group) have, in some way, "seen through" ordinary ethical judgements, seen them for what they really are, and are truly better off than others for it. The problem they then have is how to understand the nature of their own allegedly objective superiority.

[31] To borrow a device from Reeve (1988), 11ff.

[32] Conventionalism will come back in Book 2 when Glaucon and Adeimantus take up Thrasymachus' challenge, and we shall see the role it plays there in the next chapter.

What are the values they possess which are truly the right ones? In what sense are they (or the figures they aspire to be) objectively superior to ordinary people? Once Socrates has moved Thrasymachus from thoroughgoing conventionalism or Callicles from unconstrained hedonism, and so they have agreed that what is pleasurable is not the same as what is excellent, and what is just is not simply what seems right to rulers, they are thrown back once again to the question of what excellence really is. One has an answer if it is simply instituting apparently self-serving laws or fulfilling appetites, but this leads to the unpalatable examples of the deluded tyrant (who loses his tyranny through instituting "mistaken" laws) and the insatiable catamite; and such figures are certainly not the "superior" types that Callicles and Thrasymachus have in mind. Once these ways of determining virtuous actions fall by the wayside, however, there seems to be nothing to fill in the gap.[33] What is the excellence that their superior types possess? What is the true advantage that Thrasymachus' Rulers hope to gain over the ruled? We have seen that this is a central issue throughout the dialogues, particularly in the *Gorgias*.[34]

The upshot of the argument so far is as follows. Thrasymachus begins with a sly ideological insight into justice – namely, that it is to the advantage of the rulers – but his account of what justice is consists in the ruled following the rules/laws laid down by the rulers. So, Thrasymachus begins as a conventionalist. Having conceded that rulers sometime err about what is to their advantage, the only way to render his ideological insight consistent with his conventionalism would be to accept subjectivism about advantage. Since this is unacceptable, he lays down strictures on what will count as rulers and laws. This in turn makes what began as an ideological insight now play the role of a criterion for a law's being truly just, namely, its truly being to the advantage of the ruler. This then ends what I have called "thoroughgoing" conventionalism, since it is no longer simply something's being a law that makes it just, but its being a law that is truly to the advantage of the ruler. This is unsatisfying for Cleitophon because we are thrown back to the normative question of what constitutes the advantage

[33] This will be the position pushed to the limits by Glaucon and Adeimantus in Book 2; see chapter six.

[34] Below we shall see that Thrasymachus' account of the benefits of injustice makes his position quite close to Callicles'. The question of what constitutes true harm and benefit for an agent becomes quite urgent in the arguments with Polus and Callicles. Socrates of course thinks of harm and benefit as primarily harm and benefit to the soul as such, independently of what happens to the body or one's material possessions. We shall see in the next chapter that this idea of harm and benefit again plays a central role in Glaucon's and Adeimantus' challenge in *Republic* 2 and in Socrates' subsequent response.

of the ruler; in other words, how do we know when a law is really a Law and so when the following of it is really just?

5.5 AIMING AND DETERMINING IN THE "THRASYMACHUS EPISODE"

After Thrasymachus declares that a ruler qua craftsman never errs, and so unerringly decrees what is best for himself, which is what his subjects must do and what justice is (341a), Socrates responds that, on the contrary, no craftsman (or craft) ever seeks his/its own advantage, but the advantage for whatever it rules over. If Socrates were right then the Rulers, as true craftsmen, would be seeking the advantage of the ruled – since all true craftsmen seek the advantage of the objects of their craft – and would thus institute Laws to that effect. Thrasymachus then would be wrong that justice – the following of Laws – is to the advantage of the superior. Socrates' argument thus depends on what the true relationship is between craftsman and object, not on any determination of what is truly beneficial for ruler or ruled.

Thrasymachus is exasperated by this,[35] and, after insulting Socrates, launches into his "immoralist" speech (343b–344c), which defends the superiority of injustice over justice. Thrasymachus then intends to leave, but is restrained and persuaded by everyone, including Socrates, to stay (344d). Socrates refers to the issue raised in Thrasymachus' speech as what sort of way of life makes living most worthwhile (344d7–e3). He claims that he was not persuaded by Thrasymachus' argument on behalf of the unjust life, and he urges Thrasymachus to remain and persuade them "that we who make more of justice than injustice [δικαιοσύνην ἀδικίας περὶ πλείονος ποιούμενοι] are not deliberating correctly [οὐκ ὀρθῶς βουλευόμεθα]" (345b3–4). In chapter 2 we saw the significance of this phrase concerning what a person "makes more of" in the argument of the *Crito*. I argued that what a person makes more of is what aim he takes to trump other aims. The personified "Laws" tell Socrates and Crito that they ought not to "make more of anything" above what is just (πρὸ τοῦ δικαίου, 54b2–5). The last thing Socrates asks Thrasymachus, before he begins a new argument against his position, is for him to be honest and to declare openly when he changes topics or positions (345b8–c1). When Socrates starts the next argument, he says explicitly that he is considering the "things from before" (345c1–2), and indeed his discussion ignores the points that

[35] Perhaps not unreasonably; see Beversluis (2000), 234–5 for succinct criticism of the argument.

Thrasymachus has just made in his "immoralist" speech. Instead it raises a new argument against Thrasymachus' *earlier* idea that no techne seeks its own advantage. At the end of a somewhat lengthy final speech (347b6–e2) he concludes that this is why he does not agree at all with Thrasymachus that justice is the advantage of the superior. Then, without offering anyone the chance to respond, Socrates continues:

But we will take this [discussion of whether justice is the advantage of the superior] up at some other time; it seems to me that what Thrasymachus is saying now is a much greater matter, when he claims that the life of the unjust is superior to the life of the just. (347e2–4)

What is going on here? The aiming/determining distinction makes sense of this complex ordering of arguments. Socrates is putting down the question of determining which actions are just and whether they are to the advantage of the superior person or not, and turning to the topic that we shall see is central to Thrasymachus' immoralist speech: what should be the supreme aim of one's life? He accuses Thrasymachus of changing the topic: from determining what just actions are in general to whether one ought to aim at justice or injustice above all. In the argument with Polemarchus it was Socrates who shifted the discussion from a determining question to an aiming question, "Should the just person ever harm (do wrong to) anyone?";[36] here it is Thrasymachus. Pressed by Socrates on the determining question, which in all the other dialogues always ends inconclusively, Thrasymachus shifts to an aiming question. Instead of defending the idea that virtue is supreme, however, he of course defends injustice.[37]

Until the immoralist speech, the argument has been about the nature of just *actions*: are they to the advantage of the superior, and do true rulers, who do not err, make laws for their own advantage or do real rulers make laws for the benefit and advantage of the ruled? In order for this eventually to yield a satisfactory answer to Socrates' "What is F?" question, some content would have to be given to the notion of "advantage."[38] But for

[36] Recall from the discussion of the *Crito* in chapter two and of the argument with Polemarchus above that "harm" does not mean do bodily harm to, but act unjustly or contrary to virtue towards, someone. So the question "Should the just person ever harm anyone?" is equivalent to "Is it ever right to do wrong?" A negative answer is, of course, the affirmation of SV.

[37] Annas (1981), 38–9 finds it somewhat odd that, while these two questions are separated in Book 1, the rest of the *Republic* considers them together. I shall argue that, on the contrary, the distinction is central to the main argument of the *Republic*. See chapters seven and eight.

[38] Indeed Socrates complains about Thrasymachus' answer that justice is "the advantage of the superior," since Thrasymachus himself had just told Socrates to answer without using any unclear or disputed terms like "advantage" (339a5).

most of the argument, Socrates only focuses on what he said he would focus on: the "of the superior" part, since, as he himself says, he agrees that justice is an advantage, only he is unsure about the "of the superior" part (339b5–7).[39] The particular notion of advantage and disadvantage, however, knowledge of which would enable a person to pick out the just and unjust actions, is not clear. And this is important with respect to the final evaluation of Socrates' argument. As I have emphasized, his argument thus far has been based on the idea that a craft and craftsman as such act for the benefit of the object of the craft rather than their own. If he could establish this he would cause a problem for Thrasymachus' position, which maintains that the proper ruler of a state is both a craftsman and one who aims at his own advantage. But it would not go far towards saying what justice *is*; the content of justice remains a problem. This makes sense of the end of Book 1 (354a–b), when Socrates refers to himself as having behaved like a "glutton" in moving to the question of whether the just life is better than the unjust before he had adequately resolved the question of what justice is. He is presumably referring back to this point (347e).

In understanding the immoralist speech, we should be clear that the laws are always meant for the ruled to follow. The Rulers do whatever they want; they are superlatively strong, free, and masterly (as Thrasymachus describes them, 344c5–6). Since they have these qualities they will always simply act to their own advantage, primarily by instituting Laws for others to follow which will be to their own advantage. Stephen Everson claims that Thrasymachus' praise of injustice raises additional problems about the coherence of Thrasymachus' overall position, for there is no way to account for the *injustice* of the Ruler (tyrant) in the immoralist speech. Everson argues that his injustice cannot be captured by the "legalistic" definition that justice is following the Laws (since the injustice of the tyrant is not explained with reference to the Laws), and must be understood instead in terms of Thrasymachus' new definition that justice is "the advantage of another" (343c3–4).[40] The tyrant is unjust because he ignores the interests of others and acts only in his own interest. A further problem is that

[39] We might wonder whether Socrates entirely rejects this definition. After all, in the body of the *Republic*, he argues that justice is to the advantage of the rulers, for it is to the advantage of everyone. So, although this description of justice as it stands is incomplete and perhaps misleading, especially insofar as Thrasymachus' interpretation of it maintains that justice is to the advantage of the rulers and to the *disadvantage of the ruled*, it is not simply false as stated. Furthermore, Socrates will also end up endorsing the view that the superior should rule – although he will have a much clearer account of what makes a person superior (see 7.4).

[40] Everson (1998a), 115, cf. also 124.

Thrasymachus' initial claim was that a just action is to the advantage of the superior and the ruler *is* the superior. But when the tyrant acts unjustly he is acting for his own advantage, and since he is the superior, he would also be acting justly according to the earlier account.

This is all the more vexing since, at the end of his speech, Thrasymachus claims that he has been saying the same thing all along (344c7). I think that the solution to this puzzle depends on recognizing that for Thrasymachus *injustice* is a real, objective feature of the world independent of human agreements, conventions, or laws, but that *justice* is not. If this is true, then Thrasymachus' claims about injustice, particularly about the "complete injustice" of the tyrant, ought not to be understood, contrary to Everson and others, in light of his answers to the question, "What is justice?" To give an account of justice is not *ipso facto* to give an account of injustice. For Thrasymachus injustice is a matter of exercising the natural impulse to *pleonexia*; it is worthwhile to remind ourselves that "to do injustice" (ἀδικεῖν) is simply "to do wrong." Justice, by contrast, involves some human intervention to establish laws and, further, on his revised account, laws are only true Laws when they are to the advantage of the superior rulers. We typically assume that if one is a conventionalist about *justice*, one must also be a conventionalist about *injustice*. It would then follow that prior to the institution of the conventions that constitute justice (in, for example, "the state of nature") there would be *neither* justice *nor* injustice. My claim, however, is that this is not the way that Thrasymachus thinks about these matters. Injustice is a natural state of the world, in which individuals seek their own advantage; by contrast, justice is an artificial construct aimed at constraining people's natural desires. He has been asked, and has tried to give an account of, what *justice* is. The essence of the artificiality of justice, according to Thrasymachus, is that it must be unnaturally imposed on people by forcing them to act in a way that benefits another; it is the height of irrationality to do so.

We shall see in chapter six that Glaucon similarly takes injustice to exist naturally and prior to the "invention" of justice.[41] But let us note here, as a parallel, what Protagoras says in his "Great Speech" in the eponymous dialogue. Protagoras is telling a story about how justice was given to human beings. He explains that at first Prometheus had given humans wisdom in the crafts along with fire, but that humans did not yet have "political knowledge" (πολιτική, 321d5). So, when they attempted to found cities to live together in order to survive against wild animals, "they wronged/acted

[41] We should expect this if Glaucon is, as he claims to be, genuinely restating Thrasymachus' position.

unjustly towards one another [ἠδίκουν ἀλλήλους]" (322b7) until Zeus, fearing that humans would be destroyed, told Hermes to give all people a sense of shame and justice. Protagoras' account, although very different from Thrasymachus', shares with it the idea that people can "wrong" and "do injustice to" one another in a state of nature *prior* to the presence of justice.

What is most significant about the immoralist speech for our purposes, however, is that Thrasymachus has shifted topics in precisely the way Socrates describes:[42] he has moved from talking about what determines whether some actions are just (the answer to which was whether they are in accord with Laws) to the question of whether a person is better or worse off by acting justly. In other words, he has moved from a determining question to an aiming question.

In Thrasymachus' immoralist speech he sticks to many of his previous themes, to which he now adds another insight: that just actions are in reality the good of another.[43]

> And you [Socrates] are so far out there [καὶ οὕτω πόρρω εἶ][44] concerning the just and justice and the unjust and injustice that you are ignorant that justice and the just are in reality the good of another, an advantage of both the superior and the ruler, but the peculiar, special [οἰκεία] harm of the one obeying and serving. But injustice is the contrary and rules over those who are in truth simple-minded and just, and who, being ruled over, do what is to the advantage of that one – the one who is superior – and they make him happy by serving him, but [do not make] themselves [happy] in any way whatsoever. (343c1–d1)

This description of just action deepens the ideological analysis of how justice really works – an analysis that "far out" Socrates, who is so out of touch with the way things really are, misses. Thrasymachus begins to supply the evidence for his view in the next line by saying, "Consider, o most simple-minded Socrates [ὦ εὐηθέστατε Σώκρατες] . . ." (343d2), clearly echoing his remark that Socrates is out of touch by not understanding what justice is and as such is one of the "truly simple-minded," whom he referred to in the passage above, as well as foreshadowing

[42] Beversluis (2000), 233 maintains that the shift Socrates refers to has to do with an argument about craft. But in his speech following Thrasymachus' immoralist speech Socrates clearly distinguishes the topic that Thrasymachus is discussing as being about which life is better, the just or the unjust; and he equally explicitly returns to respond to what Thrasymachus was saying "before" (345c1).

[43] As I argued above, all of Thrasymachus' "accounts" of justice are supposed, minimally, to state something common to all cases of just action and so to avoid the refutation that Cephalus' earlier definition suffered.

[44] Following Shorey (1930) note ad loc., and not Adam (1902).

his later remark that justice is only "very noble simple-mindedness" (348c12).[45]

The key to appreciating Thrasymachus' immoralism is quite similar to what we saw was critical to Callicles' account. Thrasymachus' conception of harm and benefit is eminently ordinary and consists of harm and benefit to one's body and one's possessions. In these terms it is clear that the unjust person is better off than the just one.[46] As evidence Thrasymachus cites how the just person gets the short end of the stick in all of his transactions, public and private. He pays more in taxes, and receives less in refunds. When he holds public office his own personal property falls apart and his friends and household despise him for not using his power to benefit them (343d–e). Although, unlike Callicles, Thrasymachus never explicitly endorses hedonism, it would seem to be a fairly natural extension of his view. For he extols the ability and willingness of the unjust person "to have more than his share" (πλεονεκτεῖν, 344a1) in the example of the tyrant who succeeds in taking the "property" of the citizens and enslaving them. The advantages of being a tyrant are taken to be obvious. He will be supremely wealthy, and so also happy (343c8, 344b7). Why, according to Thrasymachus, is the capable, unjust person so well off? It would be natural to say that, in addition to the material and bodily gains, he also benefits because he can have whatever he wants; his appetites are unconstrained and gratified. In this way, like the Calliclean ideal man, the Thrasymachean tyrant gains appetitive satisfaction. Callicles too, prior to presenting his hedonism, extolled "having more than one's share" as part of excellence and the happy life (*Gor.* 490a ff.). Callicles' hedonism would fit in quite well as a further explanation of the tyrant's happiness, and we shall see in the next chapter that appetite gratification makes an explicit appearance in Book 2 when Glaucon and Adeimantus restate Thrasymachus' position.

5.6 SOCRATES' DEFENSE OF SV IN *REPUBLIC* 1

Socrates moves without pause from his second argument, which attempts to show that a craft seeks the advantage of what it rules over (345c–347d), to consider the "much greater" question raised by Thrasymachus' immoralist speech: is the unjust life superior to the just life? (347e). Socrates has already

[45] Socrates will pointedly offer his own revision of what constitutes "simple-mindedness" in Book 3, 400d10–e3.

[46] This point will be developed in detail by Glaucon and Adeimantus in Book 2; see next chapter.

declared that Thrasymachus' speech did not persuade him (345a–b) that the unjust life is better than the just one, and in the present passage he turns and asks what Glaucon thinks. Glaucon replies:

I at any rate think that the life of the just is more profitable [λυσιτελέστερον].

But, I [Socrates] said, didn't you hear how many good things Thrasymachus just went through that belong to the life of the unjust?

I heard, he [Glaucon] said, but I was not persuaded [ἤκουσα, ἔφη, ἀλλ᾽ οὐ πείθομαι].[47] (347e7–348a3)

This passage repeats the theme of persuasion, recalling the opening of the dialogue, when Polemarchus asks Glaucon whether he and Socrates could persuade someone who does not listen (327c12). Glaucon represents an example of someone who "listened to and heard" the alleged good things that accrue to the unjust person, but who was not persuaded by them to believe that the unjust life is superior.[48] Thrasymachus as well seems to be someone who will listen, but not be persuaded, at least not by the argument of Book 1. Furthermore, this passage serves to place Glaucon firmly on Socrates' side in this argument, a place he will continue to occupy for the rest of the work.

Getting nowhere with the determining question about justice, Socrates happily turns to the "much greater" question of whether the just life is better than the unjust. But he runs into trouble. Since Thrasymachus has said that injustice is more profitable than justice, Socrates looks for quick agreement that justice is a virtue and injustice a vice. It is clear where he is headed: to repeat the argumentative move employed with Polemarchus

[47] The lines that follow this interchange, 348a7–b7, are also quite striking. When Glaucon says that he would like to try to persuade Thrasymachus that he is wrong, Socrates then raises the issue of their approach. One method would be to oppose Thrasymachus' *logos* (presumably the "immoralist speech") with a *logos* of their own that presented the good things that accrue to the just life. Then Thrasymachus would respond again, and then they again. After this they would need a jury to add up and measure all the good things on each side to determine which was best. Alternatively, they could simply continue with the question-and-answer way. Glaucon opts for the latter. But, as Shorey alone notes, in Book 2 (358d ff.) it seems that they adopt the former method. It is tempting to see here a contrast of approaches from the perspective of the outer frame. The results of this method turn out to be dissatisfying even for Glaucon himself. If this is right we might wonder who the "jury" is who counts and adds up the advantages of the just and unjust lives; perhaps it is the audience of the outer frame, we readers.

[48] Book 2 opens with Glaucon once again raising the issue of persuasion: does Socrates want simply to *seem* to have persuaded them that justice is in every way better than injustice, or to have really done so (357a5–b2)? For Glaucon points out that he has not yet really done so, and appears to talk for all of the people present. He and Adeimantus will emphasize repeatedly, however, that they are not persuaded by Thrasymachus despite the fact that they will reformulate his argument. See chapter six.

(335b–d). In that interlude they moved from consideration of a determining question, "What is justice?", to an aiming question, "Would a just person ever harm anyone?", where Socrates carefully and quietly, if uncritically, imported the idea of a harm to the soul – that is, harm to a person's virtue. But when Thrasymachus denies that justice is virtue and that injustice is a vice, Socrates' path is blocked, and he must try a new tack. He is forced to supply a new argument from 349a to 350d ("the *pleonexia* argument"). This argument relies on a very questionable use of the notion of techne.[49] What is most striking for our purposes is simply that Socrates tries to establish that justice is a virtue without considering the effect of just actions on the soul. There is no discussion of the harm or benefit that justice does to the soul. The effect of just actions on the soul will, of course, be center stage in Book 2.

Once the *pleonexia* argument is completed Socrates reaches the point from which he tried to begin, concluding, "justice is virtue and wisdom, and injustice is vice and ignorance; let's take this as set" (350d4–6). There is clear textual evidence that the argumentative relationship with Thrasymachus is breaking down at this point. At the beginning of this argument, Socrates declares that they will have to push on, despite Thrasymachus' radical stance, adding that Thrasymachus really seems to him to be saying what he believes (349a). Thrasymachus retorts that it makes no difference whether he believes what he is saying or not; it is the account Socrates ought to refute.[50] Socrates quickly concedes, and the *pleonexia* argument commences. After the *pleonexia* argument, Socrates narrates in present time that Thrasymachus fought against him throughout, sweating profusely and not easily conceding Socrates' points, contrary to how Socrates has presented matters (350c–d). Then Socrates says that Thrasymachus blushed (350d3). Why does Thrasymachus blush? In the *Euthydemus* (297a), Dionysodorus blushes as well. In that case his brother has just pointed out to him that he has jeopardized the argument; Socrates will win. When Dionysodorus realizes his error, he blushes. What is at work here is the sense of shame mentioned in chapter three. Philosophical argument is agonistic. And

[49] Reeve (1988), 20 calls it "grossly fallacious." Book 1 frequently plays with the concept of techne in strange and difficult ways. See also, e.g., Irwin (1995), ch. 11; Parry (1996), ch. 1, and Roochnik (1996).

[50] Beversluis (2000), 237 claims that this moment is unique in the "early" dialogues. But in the *Protagoras* Socrates offers the abandonment of the "say what you believe" constraint after things start getting difficult between him and Protagoras. He tells Protagoras that he does not care whether Protagoras believes the answers, so long as Protagoras answers; it is chiefly the "account" he is testing (333c). Vlastos (1983/1994) emphasizes the importance of the "say what you believe" constraint; see Irwin (1994) for a discussion of Vlastos' view.

even if, as is surely the case, Plato wants to distinguish Socrates' type of argumentation and his own from the sort of eristic practiced by a Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, that does not mean that there are not winners and losers in the more noble type of argument practiced by Socrates. Callicles and Thrasymachus, with their esteem of the "superior" type, who conquers and "has more" than ordinary people, are keenly aware of the shame of being bested publicly by Socrates. Once Socrates has, apparently at least, established his key premise – that justice is virtue and injustice vice – and so has put the argument back on a Socratic playing field, Thrasymachus has lost.

But Plato has given us reason to temper such an assessment in this case. After all, Socrates is the narrator, so he is in control of the descriptive details, and, from the perspective of the outer frame, Plato could expect a careful reader to be aware of this. Socrates says that Thrasymachus did not concede these points easily, but he does not tell us *how* Thrasymachus objected. Socrates hides from us some of Thrasymachus' argument. We can see some further justification for his own final description of himself as a glutton insofar as he keeps the precise details of what happened in the argument for himself, away from the audience of the outer frame. We know that, at the beginning of Book 2, Socrates believes that the discussion is over. Obviously, however, he is wrong; even Glaucon and Adeimantus, who explicitly agree with Socrates about the value of justice, want to go through the argument again. We might suspect then that Thrasymachus' responses made a bit more of an effect on the audience of the inner frame than Socrates, in his narration, lets us in on. (This is not to deny that Glaucon and Adeimantus also take the argument up again in Book 2 because of a *dissatisfaction* with Socrates' positive arguments in Book 1.) Moreover, Socrates does report that Thrasymachus himself says he is not satisfied with Socrates' argument and that he has quite a bit to say about these matters, but that he knows that if he did Socrates would accuse him of demagoguery (δημηγορεῖν) (350d9–e1). Thrasymachus then agrees simply to nod agreement and disagreement "just as one does to old women telling stories" (350e2–3). Socrates, rather lamely, tells him not to answer contrary to his own opinion, but when Thrasymachus says that he is doing it to please Socrates since he won't let him make a speech, Socrates happily concedes. From here to the end of Book 1 Thrasymachus has ceased, like Callicles in the *Gorgias* after 510, to be a real interlocutor. Furthermore, an attentive reader, as in the *Gorgias*, is not fooled into thinking that Socrates is persuading anybody here.

The book ends with one of Socrates' most sweeping disavowals in the corpus (see 1.3):

> I have not feasted well, however – but it is my own fault, not yours. Just as gluttons always snatch at every dish that is passed and taste it before they have appropriately enjoyed the previous one, so it seems to me that I too, before finding the first object of our inquiry – what justice is – let that go and hastened off to consider something about it, namely, whether it is vice and ignorance or wisdom and virtue; and again later when the account broke in that injustice is more profitable than justice I could not refrain from turning to that from the other subject. So that for me the present outcome of the discussion is that I know nothing. For when I don't know what the just is, I shall hardly know whether it is a virtue or not, and whether the one who has it is or is not happy. (354a13–c3)

Socrates here draws out the metaphor of a "feast of words," begun by Thrasymachus in the midst of his declaration that he will no longer try to oppose Socrates – he may have his feast (352b).[51] As I emphasized in chapter one, Socrates' disavowals ought to be considered in context. This disavowal comes at the end of a summary of the argument that has preceded, and I think we can see that this summary is not wholly accurate. For one thing, the order is incorrect. Socrates and Thrasymachus were in the midst of arguing about a determining question whether justice was the advantage of the superior – when Thrasymachus embarked on his "immoralist speech," exasperated by Socrates' claim that the craft of sheep-herding aims at the welfare of the sheep. In the immoralist speech Thrasymachus addresses an aiming question, arguing that the unjust person is far better off than the just person. It is then Socrates who, after saying that he was not persuaded, asks Thrasymachus not to switch topics, and who goes back to offer one more argument about what justice is. Then, at 347e, Socrates does "rush headlong" to the next topic, but it is the aiming question first raised by Thrasymachus; it is not the topic that he mentions above, whether justice is a virtue and wisdom or a vice and ignorance, but one concerning whether the just life is better than the unjust life, which he is eager to discuss. It is only because Thrasymachus rejects the idea that justice is a virtue that Socrates is forced to embark on the *pleonexia* argument and to consider the more radical question of whether justice is a virtue in the first place.

In the next three chapters we shall see that the aiming/determining distinction at play here in Book 1 proves pivotal to understanding the argument of the body of the *Republic*.

[51] See Worman (2008), esp. ch. 4, on the broader significance of this type of imagery, in Plato as well as in other prose and in poetry in the fifth and fourth centuries.

CHAPTER 6

The benefits of injustice

6.1 DEFINING JUSTICE AND THE PROJECT OF THE *REPUBLIC*

Whatever may have been the case in previous dialogues, and even in *Republic* 1, most commentators believe that once Glaucon and Adeimantus take over the argument they "identify being just with a property possessed primarily by psyches."[1] This point is put in more general terms by saying that Plato moves in the *Republic* from an act-centered account of justice or virtue to an agent-centered account.[2] The explanation of this is that once Plato has despaired of being able to provide an act-centered account of what justice is, he begins in Book 2 to present an agent-centered one, which culminates in his Book 4 account of "Platonic" justice as harmony in the tripartite soul.[3] The attractiveness of this interpretation is allegedly buttressed by the plausibility of the ethical theory behind it. Plato, one of the original virtue ethicists, rejects the idea that one can specify virtuous actions *first* and then define the virtuous agent as the one who performs such actions and performs them in the right way. Matters will instead be the other way round. Defining what it is to be a virtuous person first, virtuous actions will then be the actions done by that sort of person.[4]

[1] Reeve (1988), 35; cf. 24–5. Irwin (1995), 378, n. 5 agrees.

[2] While I shall often speak for obvious reasons about justice and injustice in the context of the *Republic*, we should recall that, as in the discussions of the *Apology, Crito*, and *Gorgias*, the just/unjust action is understood to be synonymous with the virtuous/vicious, the right/wrong, and the fine/ignoble action. Thus "doing injustice" is synonymous with "wrongdoing." Under a suitably broad understanding of "moral," introductory philosophy textbooks are right in saying that the central question of the Republic is "Why be moral?"

[3] This view can be found in Annas (1981), 23–4, who sums up the force of Socrates' objections to Cephalus and Polemarchus as follows: "They show up the inadequacy of the notion that one can say what justice is by specifying kinds of action at all. Later in the *Republic*, when we find what Plato's own account is, we shall see that he *moves away entirely from the doing of certain actions*, and instead characterizes justice as a state of the agent. The primary questions will turn out to be those about the just person, and questions about which actions are just actions will be *in an important way secondary*." (my emphases).

[4] See too discussion in 4.2.

If the argument of this book is correct, however, this will not be the best way of understanding how the central argument of the *Republic* develops. Appeal to the state of the virtuous person's soul is used, as it has been used, to address an aiming question: why should one do the virtuous action above all? Socrates' final speeches in the *Gorgias* describe passionately and vividly the ill effects of unjust action on that most important part of ourselves, our soul. Although this is not a way of addressing a determining question at all, we should *not* conclude that the determining question becomes "secondary," if that means either that it can somehow be answered by defining justice in terms of a state of soul, or else that it can simply be dropped. A harmonious state of soul *and* a property J which is common to all and only just actions and explains why they are just could *both* be answers to a question of the form "What is justice?" But they are not answers to the *same* question. As I argued in chapter four, an account of what it is to be virtuous does not answer the determining question.

Furthermore, the habituation principle, explicit in the *Crito* and elaborated in the *Gorgias*, is repeated in much more detail in the *Republic*. It provides an important link between virtuous actions and virtuous character.[5] The fact that the habituation principle is never abandoned by Plato, but rather developed with increasing sophistication, is a strong reason not to see the difference between discussion of justice as a state of soul and as a property of actions as two conflicting ways of discussing the nature of justice. Rather, when you explain the effect of justice on the soul, you explain *why* a person ought to act justly above all: the question at issue, as we shall see, in Glaucon's and Adeimantus' challenge. But, far from relegating questions about actions to a "secondary" position, it makes them very urgent. We still need some way of determining which actions are the just ones and which are not. The question that has been plaguing Socrates has not gone away and it is not diminished in its centrality merely because there is a newer, more complex, account of the effect of just actions on a person's soul. In fact, insofar as the good effects of just action have been persuasively described in detail, to that extent the need to discover an answer to determining questions becomes that much more intense. An account of the just soul may be very useful for persuading an agent of the truth and significance of SV, but this simply magnifies the problem of Cleitophon with which we began.

Moreover, we need to keep in mind a distinction of the type in the *Euthyphro* (see 10a ff.): although by definition a virtuous person does virtuous

[5] In 7.2–3 we shall see that Plato's elaborate discussion of proper education is predicated on the principle that repeated performance of the right sort of actions generates a soul of a corresponding type.

actions, he does them because they are virtuous, they are not virtuous because he does them. The point of an "agent-centered" or virtue-based account of the type that Plato and Aristotle adopt is that a person who does not have the "perspective"[6] of the virtuous person cannot be counted on to determine correctly what the virtuous action is in all circumstances. The virtuous person by contrast has a grasp of objective moral truth: she knows without error what is truly virtuous and fine. So although we non-virtuous types might seek help when we deliberate about what to do by looking at what the virtuous person does, or by thinking about what a virtuous agent would do, the simple but important fact remains that virtuous actions are not virtuous because a virtuous person does them, rather, the virtuous person is virtuous because, at a minimum, she correctly discerns what is truly virtuous and unfailingly acts accordingly.

Readers, particularly those thinking of Aristotle, might object that this cannot be an adequate account of the virtuous person and of virtuous action. For the virtuous action *itself* must be characterized with reference to the agent's motivation. In Aristotle's language it is not enough to do what the virtuous person would do, one must do it in the *way* the virtuous person would do it (*NE* 2.4, 1105a28–33).[7] But, even if we agree with Aristotle, I have emphasized that an agent must have doing the virtuous action as her supreme aim in order to determine correctly what the virtuous action is (see 1.6). For, if her overall aim is, for example, to maximize her financial gain, this may sometimes lead her to do the virtuous action and sometimes not, depending on varying circumstances. Thus, as we might put it, the issue is not the "purity" of her motive, but whether she has some further end (pleasure, money) beyond the doing of the truly virtuous action. Commitment to SV secures that she does not, and thus secures that, by being committed to SV, one aims at virtue above all. What this does in turn is to ensure that the agent is solving the right *problem*: namely, determining what the virtuous action is (and not what the most pleasurable or financially profitable action is). Thus being committed to SV is a necessary condition for correctly solving determining questions about virtuous action.

6.2 THE CLASSIFICATION OF GOODS

In the opening Stephanus page of Book 2, Glaucon lays out a notorious tripartite classification of goods: those desirable only for themselves

[6] Whatever combination of cognitive and desiderative states this amounts to.
[7] See Whiting (2002).

independently of their consequences, those desirable for their own sake and for their consequences, and those which are desirable only for their consequences. The debate about the proper interpretation of the classification of goods, both on its own terms and in terms of how it fits with the subsequent arguments, has traditionally focused on whether Glaucon's notion of a good in itself does or does not include causal consequences of the good, including, notoriously, happiness.[8] Many commentators agree that Glaucon's category of "good in itself" includes things that are, in some sense, consequences or effects, and so what puts them in the category of being a good in itself is their having a *particular sort* of effect or consequence. The challenge then becomes specifying what type of causal effect still counts as being part of a thing's being good in itself.[9] For reasons I shall offer below, I think it is uncontroversial that the category of goods in themselves must include things that we consider "causal consequences" in the modern sense. The debate that unfolds is one about whether a person is better off performing just or unjust actions and so better off being just or unjust. Most scholars interpret this as part and parcel of the eudaimonist outlook of the *Republic* as a whole.[10]

While I do not dispute this, I shall focus on how being just or unjust, and acting justly or unjustly, is better or worse for a person's soul; this is the specific challenge of the *Republic*.[11] Throughout the dialogues we have seen the significant presence of the distinction between goods of the soul, goods of the body, and material possessions.[12] I have shown that the concept of a good *for* the soul is crucial to Socrates' argument for SV, especially in the *Gorgias*. These points are important for understanding Glaucon's classification of goods and its connection to his and Adeimantus' challenge. I shall argue that when Glaucon speaks of a "good itself by itself" he means something that benefits the soul qua soul. When he talks about something being chosen (or avoided) for its good (or bad) consequences, he is referring to the benefits gained to the body or to one's material possessions. Therefore

[8] The modern debate begins in earnest with the articles of Foster (1937) and Mabbott (1937/1971).

[9] See, e.g., Sachs (1963/1998), 209, Kirwan (1965), and White (1984). Irwin (1995), §135 argues that Plato maintains that justice is not a causal means to happiness, but a dominant part or component of it.

[10] For example, see Irwin (1995), ch. 12; Kraut (1992b); Butler (2002).

[11] I do not deny that having more benefits for one's soul is necessary for, or perhaps a component of, being happy. But I think that it is not the concept of happiness in any very robust sense that is doing the argumentative work in the *Republic*. Rather the focus is more specifically on what being just and virtuous (which we shall see is a causal consequence of acting justly and virtuously) does for the soul; is being just somehow good for the soul, and if so, how?

[12] Recall that I intend the phrase "material possessions" to cover a broad category including not only one's possessions and property, but also one's reputation and luck.

I shall argue that the category of a good in itself for Plato is not concerned with the modern notion of being independent of any causal consequences (some goods in themselves are, some are not), but with the very Platonic idea of something being good for the soul independently of any effects it may have on one's body or the state of one's material possessions. On this reading, when Glaucon wishes to hear justice praised "itself by itself" (αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό, 358d2–3), his question amounts to: how is being just good for the soul? We shall see that Glaucon is concerned with just actions and that he holds that one causal effect of acting justly is that it causes the soul to become just.[13] Someone might worry that in order for the doing of just actions to yield a just soul, the person must also do the actions with the right motive. Therefore simply doing just actions (for example, paying one's fair share) is not sufficient to make a person just. While this is an issue that does come up to a degree later in the *Republic*, I deny that there is any concern in Glaucon's and Adeimantus' argument with the motive of the just person. Whenever they discuss characters who seem to be just but are not, such as the possessor of the ring of Gyges or Adeimantus' fellow who keeps a "façade of virtue" around him (365c3–6), it is clear that these are people who are actively engaged in wrongdoing and injustice, but who succeed at keeping their wrongdoing hidden (and so they *appear* just – that is, *appear* not to be doing anything wrong). Indeed, a difficult but very important goal for the successful unjust person is to keep his actions hidden (365c–d). Glaucon and Adeimantus never consider a character whom we would describe as engaging in all and only just actions, but for the wrong reasons.

I shall speak, then, of essential properties of just actions (which would include both their intrinsic features and their causal consequence of making a person just), as distinct from merely *accidental* properties which justice may have in particular contexts. So Glaucon is indeed asking a question about causal consequences, but of a select type: the causal effects of acting justly on the soul. And this is why he moves easily from almost ubiquitous talk of "practicing justice" to questions about the justice of the soul. Taking it for granted that acting justly (not merely seeming to act justly) makes

[13] Heinaman (2002), 324 clearly recognizes this. Citing 588b–590a, he writes: "It is clear that psychic justice is a causal consequence of just action and that psychic injustice is a causal consequence of unjust action." I entirely agree with Heinaman's claim that some things which we would call causal consequences are part of what counts towards something being a "good in itself" in Plato's sense. Heinaman, however, retains the language of "intrinsic good" as a gloss for Plato's idea of a good "for itself," which can be confusing since something being an intrinsic good typically means that its goodness is independent of any of its causal consequences.

one just, he then presses the question: "Why would one want to be *that*?" The final answer to *why* we ought to be just will be in terms of the value of the state of the soul that is effected by acting justly.

In the rest of this section, I shall show that such an interpretation is compatible with the examples Glaucon offers of goods in the three classes. In the later sections of the chapter I shall provide evidence that it best explains the argument we actually get from Glaucon and Adeimantus on behalf of the many.[14]

The first class of goods are those that are desired not for their consequences (τῶν ἀποβαινόντων) but are each welcomed "itself for the sake of itself" (αὐτὸ αὑτοῦ ἕνεκα); for example, "enjoyment" (τὸ χαίρειν) and those pleasures (αἱ ἡδοναί) which are harmless and from which nothing other arises later on account of them other than having enjoyment (χαίρειν ἔχοντα) (357b4–8). The discussion about this first class has focused on whether Plato already presents the idea of a "good in itself" as being good in itself because of a causal consequence insofar as the passage seems to suggest that what makes pleasures goods in themselves is that they have the causal consequence of enjoyment and no other (bad) consequences.[15] I do not think that this is the central issue, however. We might instead think about this first class of goods in terms of Glaucon's and Adeimantus' upcoming concern with how being just could be good for the soul. Pleasure and having enjoyment are desirable states of soul for their own sakes. As we saw in chapter three, in the *Gorgias* Callicles maintains that appetite gratification is the only good in itself: excellence at appetite gratification (gratifying the most and most extensive appetites) is what excellence and happiness are. Although the examples from this first class, by contrast, stop quite short of hedonism of any stripe – pleasures and enjoyment are goods, so long as they are "not harmful [ἀβλαβεῖς] and nothing arises on account of these at a later time other than having enjoyment" (357b7–8) – nevertheless what makes them goods in themselves are the pleasures that they are in the soul.

The second class contains goods that we value both for themselves and for the sake of their consequences. The examples are: thinking, seeing, and being healthy. There is no explanation of how or why these examples fall

[14] In chapters seven and eight I shall argue that it makes good sense of the *Republic*'s answer as well.

[15] See Heinaman (2002) 325, n. 32 for a defense of this reading, and against Irwin's (1977), 325, n. 8 attempt to justify taking χαίρειν and ἡδοναί as equivalent. Heinaman rightly does not rely on this by itself, however, to conclude that Plato counts a certain type of causal consequence as being part of valuing something for its own sake. For, if ἡδοναί are activities, then it is possible that the activity is identical to the enjoying: watching a TV show I like is identical to enjoying myself; the enjoyment is not a causal consequence of the watching.

under this class. Why are these "goods in themselves"? We might simply explain their status as essential goods in terms of the first class: thinking, seeing, and being healthy are enjoyable, regardless of what else they might lead to: it is simply enjoyable to think, see, or be healthy, at least in many cases.[16] On this reading, what makes them essentially valuable is identical to what makes enjoyment and pleasures essentially valuable. They are going to differ from items in the first class insofar as enjoyment itself (we assume) has no further positive or negative consequences, while thinking, seeing, and being healthy clearly can also lead to all sorts of other goods of the body and material possessions.

We might be tempted to resist this idea because we think that these three examples are goods in themselves in a way that is different from how the goods of the first class are goods in themselves; the essential goodness of thinking is surely different from the essential value of enjoyment. But succumbing to this temptation would lead us astray. While I think that Plato ultimately believes that all of these examples have goodness in themselves in a way that is not reducible to their harmless enjoyment,[17] that cannot be relied on at this stage of the argument. For there is a dialectical requirement at work here. The classes of goods that Glaucon distinguishes, together with the examples, ought to be uncontroversially acceptable to "the many" for the purposes of his argument. It is generally unremarked that Glaucon and Adeimantus do not just take up *Thrasymachus'* position, but from the beginning Glaucon identifies it as a position of "the many" (358a4). If Glaucon is really to be defending Thrasymachus' and the many's position, he must begin from premises they would accept. The many acknowledge only *one* kind of good *for* the soul, one kind of essential good: enjoyment (χαίρειν). To take enjoyment is to satisfy one's desires; it is inherently enjoyable to have one's desires satisfied and inherently painful to have them frustrated. On my reading, Glaucon's challenge will thus ask: what does it mean for something to be good for the soul, other than being a case of enjoyment? Does it mean anything at all? The many would say "no." To hold that some other mysterious, unmentioned, concept of goodness is smuggled in here other than enjoyment is not warranted by the text, and would violate the dialectical requirement of the argument.[18]

[16] For thinking and seeing it is easy to imagine things we would rather not see or think about. But presumably the point is that these activities are themselves enjoyable as such, even if some particular case of thinking about x may not be enjoyable.

[17] See 8.5 for discussion of the arguments about pleasure in Book 9.

[18] As far as I know, no commentator discusses why thinking, being healthy, and so on would be counted as goods in themselves. But, if we are not explicit that the only kind of intrinsic goodness that would

The third class of goods reinforces this interpretation. Pursued only for their consequences, things in this class are onerous or painful in themselves (ἐπίπονα). The etymology of ἐπίπονα carries the implication that such things are attended with pain, which highlights the marked contrast with the first class. Robert Heinaman has persuasively and importantly argued that what belongs in this class are what the many regard as evils in themselves.[19] Following the above interpretation of what makes things essentially good, what makes these things bad in themselves is the fact that they are themselves painful or have pain as their causal consequence for the soul. The examples are: exercising, medical treatment for a sick person, medicine itself and other ways of making money. It may be good for your body to undergo a certain treatment, but, insofar as you do not want to, your soul experiences the opposite of pleasure in the frustration of its desire. Just as the essential goodness of the previous examples consists in their *satisfying* desires, what makes these examples painful is that they *frustrate* desire; it may be "good" for your wealth to go to work and make money, but insofar as you don't want to go, your soul experiences pain, for its desire is frustrated.

Moreover, examples from the third category also provide insight into what will count as "good consequences": beauty (the result of exercise), physical health (the result of receiving medical treatment), money (the result of employment). What is crucial to these examples is that they are all benefits to the body or to one's possessions.

When Glaucon lists the three classes, he surely already knows which class Socrates will place justice in: Socrates will hardly deny that justice is a good for its own sake, and could not plausibly deny that it is "good for its consequences." The idea that justice, under ordinary circumstances, is valuable for its consequences is taken as obvious in the argument, as is the claim that injustice, under ordinary circumstances, has bad consequences.[20] After Socrates has declared that justice ought to be placed in the second class of goods, those that are good both in themselves and for their consequences, the "finest" class (358a1–3), Glaucon states that the many, like Thrasymachus,[21] do not agree, placing it instead in the third class that "must be practiced" (ἐπιτηδευτέον) only for its consequences,

be uncontroversially accepted by Thrasymachus and the many is enjoyment, we risk missing the importance of the upcoming argument.

19 Heinaman (2002), 311–15 argues that the class of things that are good only for their consequences does not contain anything that is in itself indifferent or intermediate.

20 See Heinaman (2002), 315ff.

21 Irwin (1995), 181–2 says that this description of Thrasymachus' position is "rather surprising" since he does not seem to consider justice a good at all, but calls it simply foolishness (348c2–e4). But it is

but avoided "itself by itself" as something harsh (χαλεπόν) (358a4–6).[22] The challenge that Glaucon raises here on behalf of the many is clearly a question about just *action*. What they "practice" for consequences and what they "flee" (φευκτέον) in itself are doing just actions. According to the many the reason to act justly is "for the sake of rewards and for the sake of popularity on account of reputation" (358a5). This refers to the benefits accrued to one's body and material possessions. Although acting justly involves the frustration of appetite (and so is a bad thing in itself and painful [ἐπίπονα]), in ordinary circumstances it avoids the physical harm of punishment, secures you employment for wages, and gains you further material goods on account of your good reputation (beneficial marriages, and so on).[23]

My interpretation then of the distinction between goods in themselves and goods for their consequences is as follows: something is good (or bad) in itself if it is beneficial (or harmful) to the soul itself; something is good (or bad) for its consequences if it leads to benefits (or harms) to one's body or to one's material possessions. Furthermore, I have claimed that the only candidate acknowledged by the many as a good in itself is enjoyment; they

clear that, when Thrasymachus and even Glaucon himself (359a7–b1) speak of justice as not a good, they are not denying that it can belong in the third class of "goods." Heinaman (2002) maintains that Glaucon and Adeimantus argue that justice is intrinsic evil and injustice an intrinsic good – that is, that the third class of goods are intrinsic evils. I agree, but avoid the language of "intrinsic." See Heinaman, 322–3, n. 28 for discussion of Irwin.

[22] As we shall see, there are frequent references to acting. The continual use of "practice" (ἐπιτήδευμα and cognates) highlights the importance of *action*. Practice has to do with engaging in actions of a certain sort. See Vasiliou (2002b), §3.1 on the importance of this word to the *Gorgias* and in other dialogues. Acting rightly remains the core issue, since, if being just is shown to be essentially valuable (as it will by the end of *Republic* 4) and thus shown to be desirable in itself, we will need to engage in truly just actions in order to be just. See below and, especially, chapters seven and eight.

[23] Heinaman (2002), 327ff. argues that "in *every* passage where Plato talks about excluding the consequences of justice from consideration of its intrinsic worth, it is the reputation for justice and the consequences following on that reputation which are at issue" (his emphasis). I disagree. In his discussion of 358a, Heinaman must construe both μισθῶν ("rewards") and εὐδοκιμήσεων as explained by διὰ δόξαν. Following Adam (1902) ad loc., I take διὰ δόξαν to go with εὐδοκιμήσεων alone. I think it is implausible that μισθοί refers to rewards received on account of one's reputation. The primary meaning of μισθός and its compounds has to do with wages or pay for work, although it can mean more broadly "rewards." But strong evidence that it should be understood as meaning "wages" is that it is so used a couple of paragraphs earlier (357d1) in the description of the consequences for the sake of which people consider as goods items in the third class. The examples there are explicitly "other ways of making money" (357c6–7). The concluding phrase foreshadows the one at 358a5: we do not choose things in the third class for themselves, "but for the sake of wages and other things, however many arise from them" (τῶν δὲ μισθῶν τε χάριν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα γίγνεται ἀπ' αὐτῶν, 357d1–2). Here there is no mention of "reputation" at all (this locution, with no mention of reputation, is repeated again at 358b6–7, where Glaucon explains what he wants Socrates to argue). Reputation is added at 358a5 as one of the "other things" (referred to at 357d1–2) that arise in addition to wages from such onerous activities as acting justly. See also *Rep.* 1, 345e ff., where μισθός is used repeatedly to refer to wages. I shall discuss other passages brought up by Heinaman below.

conceive of nothing else as a good *for* the soul. In this light, let us consider Glaucon's following request:

I desire to hear both what each [justice and injustice] is and what power it has itself by itself when it is in the soul [τί ἔστιν ἑκάτερον καὶ τίνα ἔχει δύναμιν αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτὸ ἐνὸν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ], but leaving off rewards and the consequences from these [τοὺς δὲ μισθοὺς καὶ τὰ γιγνόμενα ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἐᾶσαι χαίρειν]. (358b4–7)

When Glaucon asks for an explanation of the value of justice itself by itself, he is asking: what value does justice have for the soul itself, aside from the consequences of having such a state of soul for one's bodily and material well-being? We shall see in chapters seven and eight that, in the rest of the *Republic* until Book 10, 612b ff., this is precisely what Socrates addresses in the course of defending SV.

So far I have only shown that such an interpretation is *compatible* with the initial classification and the examples it offers. In what follows I shall argue that this interpretation is not only possible but also most plausible by showing how it makes neat sense of the arguments we actually get from Glaucon and Adeimantus.[24] Moreover, it shows a continuity and coherence of concerns throughout the dialogues and makes sense of what we find in the rest of the *Republic*, including the problematic arguments about pleasure in Book 9 (8.5).

6.3 UNDERSTANDING GLAUCON'S EXAMPLE

Before turning to Glaucon's and Adeimantus' argument we need to consider a methodological point that greatly affects how we understand it. Glaucon repeats that he wishes to hear justice praised "itself by itself" (358d3) and then explains the rationale behind his upcoming argument:

For this reason I will speak by lengthening out my praise for the unjust life, but by speaking [thus] I will show you the way in which I in turn also wish to listen to you on the one hand disparage injustice, and, on the other, praise justice. (358d5–7)

Commentators have read this passage so as to restrict drastically the exegetical options for understanding Glaucon's upcoming argument. Robert Heinaman concludes from the passage:

[24] This has been the sticking point in the literature. It should be clear too that I agree with two very important claims by Heinaman (2002): (1) that some causal consequences of a thing count towards whether it is a good in itself in Plato's sense; and (2) that Plato's class of things that are good only for their consequences are evils in themselves. My understanding, however, of what makes something an essential or accidental (in Heinaman's language: an "intrinsic" or "instrumental") good according to Plato is quite different from his.

Glaucon says that he wants to hear Socrates praise justice in the same way he is about to praise injustice. He wants Socrates to praise justice by showing that it is good in itself. Therefore, the reasons Glaucon goes on to give for preferring injustice to justice are reasons why injustice is supposed to be good "in itself," in the sense of the phrase that Plato has in mind.[25]

Heinaman's discussion of this passage is part of his argument that Glaucon and Adeimantus aim to show that injustice is a good in itself. I am happy to accept this as *part* of their goal, but Heinaman's reading of the passage understands it as requiring that it be their *sole* aim. For, if Glaucon is offering an argument that is the *same* as the one he wants Socrates to offer, then, since he wants Socrates to praise justice in *itself*, whatever considerations Glaucon brings to bear in arguing the case for *injustice* must, on pain of contradiction, be aimed at establishing that it is valuable in *itself*.[26] By reading the passage as Heinaman does, one must go on to say that *everything* that Glaucon appeals to in his argument – all of the advantages accrued to the person acting unjustly with Gyges' ring – is part of what makes injustice good in itself according to the many.[27] But I think that, if even the material goods gained by an unjust act do not count as "consequences" of the act, and thus are not, as the saying goes, to be counted among "the wages of sin," but instead are to count as part of injustice *itself*, then we, and Plato, are entirely at sea about what a good in itself is.[28]

Fortunately, 358d3–6 does not need to be interpreted so as to necessitate this conclusion. When Glaucon says that he will show Socrates how he wants him to praise justice by lengthening out his own praise of injustice, he need not mean that Socrates is supposed to give a speech that cites the very same sort of considerations. What he could also mean, and what makes more sense, is that, by painstakingly examining all of the *consequences* of injustice *and* justice, as well as the evil in itself of the pain of acting justly when one could get away with injustice and the good in itself of the pleasure

[25] Heinaman (2002), 318–19. Reeve (1988) 25, 28 also uses this methodological remark to conclude that reputations and rewards are consequences of justice itself according to Glaucon, but not consequences in the same sense of injustice itself. Such an asymmetry seems to me an excellent reason to rethink the interpretation of 358d5–7 that appears to necessitate it.

[26] Part of Heinaman's larger goal is to establish that Plato allows some causal consequences of a thing to count towards whether it is a good in itself or not. As I have said, this issue is of secondary importance to me, since I do not think that it helps us to explain Plato's notion of a good in itself. Something is essentially good for Plato if it either is a beneficial state of soul or causes a beneficial state of soul – so both justice as a property of a soul and just actions will count as essential goods.

[27] Heinaman (2002), 319–20.

[28] Heinaman includes such causal consequences as part of what makes something (in this case, injustice) a putative "intrinsic" good, which leads him ([2002], 327) to doubt that any interpretation could make consistent sense of which causal consequences are "consequences" of a thing and which part of the thing itself.

of acting unjustly when one can get away with it,[29] he will leave Socrates no conceptual room to maneuver other than to praise justice itself by itself, if he can. Thus the way Glaucon shows Socrates how to praise justice is *not* by providing *an example to imitate*, but by *excluding* all other options for praise other than praising justice for itself, that is, for its "effect" on the soul. Therefore in his and Adeimantus' speeches we will see them referring *both* to the supposed good consequences of unjust action (understood on my interpretation as benefits to body, possessions, and reputation) *and* to the alleged essential positive value of acting unjustly (the unfettered satisfaction of appetite).

After all, what is distinctive about Glaucon's and Adeimantus' argument is not that they establish some points that are in dispute by ordinary people. The advantage of stealing when one can get away with it and the pleasure of doing whatever you feel like are both taken to be obvious. What is special about their argument is that they cover the case so thoroughly and in such detail that they leave the question of the value of justice by itself entirely isolated and "stripped" (see 361c4). But this is the result of the cumulative effect of all of their examples, not of any controversial claim about what is to a person's advantage in some particular instance. And this is how they "show" Socrates how they want to see justice praised. Finally, this should not be surprising, for they are claiming to be presenting the view of the many; the phenomena they appeal to are plain for all to see.

6.4 THE ORIGIN OF JUSTICE ACCORDING TO THE MANY

Glaucon sets out to show three things. He lists his first topic as explaining "what sort of thing they [the many] say that justice is and from where it arises" (δικαιοσύνην οἷον εἶναί φασιν καὶ ὅθεν γεγονέναι, 358c1–2). It is striking that, every time Glaucon discusses what justice is, he conjoins it with a question about its origin.[30] By contrast, when *in propria persona* he simply asks Socrates to tell him what justice is and what capacity it has when it is present in the soul (358b4–7), he does not ask about its origin. The many's argument, however, includes an account both of what justice is and of its origin.

Glaucon maintains (on behalf of the many) that while everyone knows that doing injustice is good and suffering injustice is bad, people discovered that the badness of suffering injustice without recourse exceeded the

[29] Both to be explained, as above, in terms of satisfaction or frustration of desire.
[30] In addition to the quoted line, see 358e2, 359a5, 359b4–5.

goodness of doing injustice with impunity. Since most people are too weak to act unjustly without running significant risk of also suffering injustice, they decide it profits them to make agreements with one another neither to do nor to suffer injustice. To abide by such agreements is to be what is called lawful and just. Given this account of the genesis of justice we can see that the "being" of justice is an intermediate. Agreeing neither to do nor to suffer injustice is worse than doing injustice with impunity, but it is better than suffering injustice without recourse (359a). Although Glaucon says that doing injustice is "by nature good" and suffering it "by nature bad" (358e4–5), he does not say how or why this is so. He clearly relies on ordinary ideas, available to the many, about how this works – some details of which will be forthcoming in the story of the ring of Gyges. But there is no hint here that the natural goodness of injustice is to be restricted to its essential goodness as opposed to the goods that result from it. What is naturally good about acting unjustly without punishment is that one benefits from its consequences (that is, one accrues material and bodily benefits – wealth, good food, and so on) *and* that one gains benefit to one's soul by satisfying, not frustrating, one's desires.

The simplest and most straightforward way of reading Glaucon's first point, then, is to see him offering a conventionalist account of justice: justice is a matter of agreements that people make between one another neither to do nor to suffer injustice. This way of putting the point, however, seems to run into an immediate obstacle.[31] If Glaucon were really giving a conventionalist account of the *origin* of justice it would make no sense to say that "doing injustice" is by nature good. Doing injustice would be a matter of breaking the laws and agreements that people form with one another; prior to the formation of such covenants, in the state of nature, there would be no such thing as justice or injustice, only people acting in their own self-interest. Likewise, independently of agreements between people, there is no such thing as justice. For this reason, to say, as Glaucon does (359a2), that people form agreements with one another "neither to do nor to suffer injustice" makes no sense at all, since it is the agreements that themselves constitute what is just and unjust in the first place.

In response we can apply the point made in chapter five about the interpretation of Thrasymachus' "immoralist speech" (5.5). Glaucon is explicit that he is providing an account of the nature and origin of *justice*, not of justice *and* injustice. If, like Thrasymachus, Glaucon (as spokesperson for the many) believes that there is injustice in the state of nature prior

[31] Recognized by Gauthier (1986), 309ff.

to the "invention" of justice, then we would expect that Glaucon would speak of people "doing injustice" to one another even though there is, as yet, no such thing as justice. So criticisms, by Gauthier and others, who notice that Glaucon speaks of people "doing and suffering injustice" prior to the formation of the agreements which constitute justice, would be off the mark.[32] This will enable us to appreciate a deep connection between Thrasymachus' and Glaucon's accounts, as we should expect, given that Glaucon is explicitly restating Thrasymachus' position.

Why does Glaucon include this account of the origin and being of justice? Why not skip right to the ring of Gyges story and the arguments that justice is practiced only as something necessary and that the unjust person is happier and better off than the just person? The latter two arguments focus on the question, "Why ought a person to act justly/morally?",[33] where justice is understood to consist in just actions as ordinarily conceived. We might think that these arguments themselves would be sufficient to raise the important challenge to justice. What the account of the origin and nature of justice shows, however, is that part of the many's view is that justice is not, after all, something "real"; it is simply the product of an agreement or convention.[34] What is real are benefits to the self, and the self can be benefited in three ways: in its soul, its body, and its possessions. As we saw in the *Gorgias*, the conception of harm and benefit that emerges for Callicles consists of fulfilling appetites. The advantage of such a view is that one can determine what benefits oneself in a relatively straightforward way: simply determine what one has an appetite for. If a person is strong enough, he can get it, and thus obtain the good in itself of appetite satisfaction as well as the good consequences of bodily and material benefits. This goes hand in hand with the idea of justice as something that is not really real, something that does not have an objective, independent, nature of its own. Unlike the next couple of arguments, the conventionalist account appears to supply an answer to Socrates' "What is F?" question: one can determine whether an act is just or not by looking to see whether it is forbidden or allowed by the

[32] This would make moves like Irwin's (1995), 183 unnecessary: "Glaucon does not claim that just and unjust action are impossible outside a state . . . Glaucon claims that the fact that the laws require just action explains how justice came into being (359c5); this is not because there was no such thing as just action before there was a law, but because the existence of law promotes the growth of justice." Although this interpretation might successfully counter Gauthier's criticism, it does not seem to me to be very plausible that Glaucon would then be giving an account of the "origin and nature" of justice.

[33] That is, why ought one to refrain from "doing wrong"?

[34] Glaucon says at 359a that he will supply the γένεσις καὶ οὐσία of justice. In the middle books of the *Republic* we shall learn that the real οὐσία of justice is the Form of Justice; and Forms, of course, have no genesis.

agreements made.[35] If we ask why a person should act justly the upcoming arguments claim that in fact, if a person is strong, he would not and should not. But the conventionalist position adds a further point that is independent of its being able to resolve disputes: when a person violates justice, he is not violating some objective standard of true goodness; he is simply going against the agreements of people. Slightly further on Glaucon says:

> For they [the many] will say that in reality [τῷ ὄντι] the unjust man, insofar as he is pursuing a matter of the truth [ἅτε ἐπιτηδεύοντα πρᾶγμα ἀληθείας ἐχόμενον], and not living by opinion [οὐ πρὸς δόξαν ζῶντα], desires not to *seem* to be unjust but to *be* . . . (362a4–7)

This is a striking passage that draws on the resources of the conventionalist argument. The unjust person is not only unabashedly pursuing his self-interest, but also acting in a manner consonant with reality and the truth. To act justly, by contrast, not only does not benefit one, but it is to act under a false idol, to be living by mere opinion.[36] If conventionalism were false, and the ordinary conception of justice were objectively true, then, the unjust person would not be in as strong a position, insofar as he could not simply dismiss justice as an artificial fiction, as something unreal. He might still, of course, query *why* he ought to act in accordance with justice – how would it be in his interest to act justly (or be just)? But he could no longer oppose the reality of the benefit accrued to him by injustice with the merely conventional nature of the justice he violates. Rather he would have to concede that he acts against something that is real and true. In the *Euthyphro* (10d), Socrates and Euthyphro agree that what is pious and right has a nature that is independent of anyone's (in particular of the gods') beliefs about or attitudes towards it. In the *Phaedo*, and later in the *Republic*, justice will turn out to be an independently existing eternal entity: the Form of Justice. These three dialogues have in common the belief that justice is something objective and without an origin: what is just is just because of properties it has and not because of what some people or gods agree to, or think about it.

6.5 THE BENEFITS OF INJUSTICE

My concern in looking at the second two parts of Glaucon's argument – intended to establish that those who "practice" (οἱ ἐπιτηδεύοντες) justice

[35] This picks up on the discussion of conventionalism in Book 1; see 5.2.
[36] Recall chapter five where we saw that Thrasymachus calls Socrates foolish and simple-minded. The foolishness at issue is that of an adult who believes in Santa Claus or the tooth fairy.

practice it "unwillingly" and that this is reasonable because the unjust life is much better than the just one – is to add to the evidence that the distinction between an essential good and an accidental good is based on one between goods that benefit the soul and those that benefit the body or one's material possessions. Thus, when Glaucon argues that, given the ring of Gyges, the just and unjust person would behave in the same way, he is establishing that acting unjustly provides benefits to soul, body, and possessions. Injustice turns out to be a good in itself *and* for its consequences.

Recall that Glaucon's goal is for Socrates to consider justice itself by itself. He will show him how he wants justice praised by stripping it of all its consequences. To strip acting justly of all its consequences is to consider its effect on the soul alone. Glaucon's claim, on behalf of the many, is that, limited to this dimension of assessment, justice is painful and "harsh." But harsh in what sense? Take the example of Gyges' ring. If I have the ring, and so will suffer no harm to my body or to my possessions by acting unjustly (that is, I run no risk of punishment), and I desire something that it is not just for me to take, it will be painful for me to forgo it. Furthermore, the pain of acting justly with the ring is precisely not bodily pain: it is the pain of frustrated appetite – not getting something you want. Acting justly is thus in this sense bad; it is not simply indifferent. For the many, there is *no* other interpretation of good or bad for the soul; they have no other conception of the "health" or well-being of the soul. By parallel reasoning, acting unjustly *with* the ring – the obvious material and bodily advantages aside – is enjoyable insofar as it results in appetitive satisfaction as opposed to frustration.[37] To this extent, then, Glaucon holds that injustice is a good in itself: insofar as injustice results in "enjoyment" (and not in frustration), it is desirable in itself.

When Glaucon sets up the ring example, his language is quite specific. He says that he will give the power to the just and the unjust person "to do whatever he would wish" (ποιεῖν ὅτι ἂν βούληται) (359c1–3) and then see where desire (ἐπιθυμία) leads each one. The appeal made for the value of injustice by itself is centered on the notion of doing "whatever one wants" – a person's desire not being frustrated. When Glaucon compares the two types, assuming that each has a ring (360b4 ff.), he argues that no one would be able to resist taking things that are not rightly his (the good consequences of injustice), nor would they be able to resist the opportunities that the ring affords its bearer of doing "whatever he wishes": he can take from

[37] We shall see that Plato takes this seriously and addresses the alleged value of satisfying appetite in his discussion of pleasure in Book 9. See 8.5.

the market fearlessly "whatever he wishes" (ὅτι βούλοιτο, 360b8), have sex "with anyone he wishes" (ὅτῳ βούλοιτο, 360c1) and kill or release from bonds "whomever he wishes" (οὕστινας βούλοιτο, 360c2).[38] Finally, anyone who didn't "ever wish" (ποτε ἐθέλοι, 360d4) to do any injustice would be thought a fool. The repeated emphasis on the satisfaction of desires shows the essential goodness of injustice and the essential badness of justice: satisfying one's desire is "enjoyment" (χαίρειν), to act justly is to frustrate this desire, a state which is painful and harsh. As regards pleasure and pain, then, injustice is good and justice bad for the soul.

The final stage of Glaucon's argument shows how he wants Socrates to argue. In order to judge properly between the just and unjust lives to determine which is better, he must separate the most just and the most unjust person and make each perfect in his own "practice" (ἐπιτήδευμα). When Glaucon "strips" the just man of everything except his justice, he deprives him of goods of every type. The most extreme case is to be just without seeming to be just. Such a person is deprived of the ordinary good consequences of justice – ordinary pay for work, security, good reputation, and so on. He will gain, of course, no material benefits, and then he will suffer the most outrageous bodily harms (361e). Moreover, given the evidence of the Gyges part of the argument, and its claims about human psychology, there will also be no benefit to be had from one's justice by itself insofar as one's desires are entirely and completely frustrated.

The completely unjust person, by contrast, not only profits and gains the rewards from the fact that he has no difficulty doing injustice (362b4–5), that is, he reaps material and bodily advantages (wealth, physical safety, not being impaled, and so on), but he also has the good for his soul of desire satisfaction. Glaucon again releases a flurry of "whatever he wishes" (ἂν βούληται, 362b3 (twice), 362c4; ἂν ἐθέλῃ, 362b4). Like the position of Callicles, Glaucon's unjust man gains the good in itself of unrestrained desire satisfaction. Since this is the only candidate considered as a good for the soul, it is entirely unconstrained by any notion of a moral good. I argued above that this was part of the point of the conventionalist argument: justice is not a real, objective thing. In a passage from this section that I quoted above (362a4–7), when the completely unjust person pursues his desires, whatever they are for and wherever they lead, he not only has a good in itself, but his actions have reality and truth on their side, as opposed to the allegedly fictional idea that the desire frustration involved in acting justly has some real value of its own.

[38] This is foreshadowed in *Republic* I when Socrates denies that a person is better off being unjust even if he can do "whatever he wants" (ἃ βούλεται) unhindered (345a4).

Glaucon's argument is, then, as follows. Something is good either essentially, or accidentally for its consequences, or both. If it is good essentially that means it provides some good for the soul, and the only sort of good for the soul recognized by the many is enjoyment or appetite satisfaction. The many recognize, however, that sometimes appetite satisfaction must be curtailed in order to acquire goods of the body or material possessions: a person must go to work to make money, must submit to medical treatment to be healthy. Similarly, in the ordinary world, a person must submit to justice, although it is painful insofar as it is not what one would "want" to do, as part of a societal agreement in order not to suffer an even greater deprivation of goods by suffering injustice without recourse.

The point of Glaucon's argument is that justice itself by itself is worth absolutely nothing. It gains no material goods, no benefit for the body, and no benefit for the soul. None of these claims is taken by itself to be controversial: the conception of harm and benefit at work is the many's. The harm of being punched or of not getting what one wants and the benefit of money or of desire satisfaction are supposed to be plain to everyone. Glaucon's argument can seem to leave no room for some other conception of harm and benefit according to which justice is a good in itself after all. Glaucon has shown Socrates how he wants him to argue, then, *not* by himself arguing merely that injustice is a good in itself, but by leaving, apparently, no conceptual space to advocate for justice. *All* of the goods, of *all* types, accrue to the perfectly unjust person. Since the just person is left with no goods whatsoever, there is no reason to be just, only to seem just.

It may be true that Adeimantus' argument does not add much of philosophical interest to a contemporary reader.[39] What Adeimantus' argument emphasizes more vividly for my purposes, however, is that the good consequences of being just are the same as the good consequences of seeming just.[40] Therefore, as Glaucon has already argued, if one does not seem just, but only is just, there will be no good consequences. This is clearly not the case for injustice. If one seems unjust, he suffers bad consequences, but if a person can manage to be unjust without seeming unjust (either, say, by

[39] Stokes (1987) argues that Adeimantus holds a distinct position which abandons the premise that justice is a virtue; for discussion see Inwood (1987). Annas (1981), 65 remarks that the length of his speech is not warranted given the significance of its impact on the argument. I think that this impression is exacerbated by our distance from ancient Greek poetry and religion. Since the religious beliefs and worries associated with them are rather remote from our own, it certainly adds to the impression that Adeimantus is not contributing anything new to the argument.

[40] We should note, however, that this does not deprive truly being just of having, in ordinary circumstances, the same good consequences; see 366a. After 612b in Book 10, Socrates takes up these consequences.

having a Gyges' ring, or by diligence and effort [365c–d]) he will reap the good consequences of injustice as well as the satisfaction of appetite fulfillment. By contrast it is painful to be just; since it involves the frustration of a natural desire for *pleonexia*,[41] being just and acting justly have no essential value either; so, there is really no reason left to be just. Adeimantus seconds these points. At 364a ff., he adds that unjust actions are generally more profitable than just ones, gaining wealth for the agent, "and other types of power." These are clearly consequential goods gained from unpunished unjust actions: goods of the body and material possessions. With such wealth, one can buy exemption from the gods from any punishment they might otherwise inflict upon the unjust. It is clear that justice bears the consequence of avoiding divine punishment (366a),[42] but the unjust person can obtain this through bribery, plus have all of the material advantages, desire satisfaction, and physical well-being that comes from injustice.

The most important aspect of Adeimantus' argument for my purposes is his clear emphasis on the effect of acting justly on the soul. I have been arguing that Glaucon's and Adeimantus' speeches work to isolate the goods of injustice and justice, both those that are essentially and those that are accidentally gained, and leave Socrates with the apparently impossible task of explaining how *being* just could be a good in any sense. As mentioned, in this way they "show" Socrates how he should argue; namely, by leaving him no conceptual space to argue in any other way. Consider the following passage:

> [Among everyone past and present] no one has ever disparaged injustice or commended justice otherwise than in respect of the repute, the honors, and the gifts that arise from each [δόξας τε καὶ τιμὰς καὶ δωρεὰς τὰς ἀπ' αὐτῶν γιγνομένας]. But what each one of them is in itself, by its own power, when it is within the soul of the one who has it and escapes the notice of both gods and men, no one has ever adequately set out in poetry or prose – namely, the argument that the one [injustice] is the greatest of all evils that the soul contains in itself, while justice is the greatest good. (366e3–367a1)

Here the contrast is clearly between the consequences of just and unjust action, on the one hand, and their effect on the soul on the other. As I have

[41] See 359c.

[42] Presumably even for the just person on the rack – Glaucon's extreme example – for the gods will know who is really just and who unjust. Now the unjust person will get around this by successfully bribing the gods with his unjust gains. Adeimantus does not consider a more diabolical scenario whereby an unjust person would bribe the gods to *punish* a just person in the afterlife, and so, in effect, make the just person "seem" unjust even after death. Plato has a clear concern to rebut this conception of the gods and to disrupt the role that traditional forms of poetry play in promulgating it. See 7.2–3 for some discussion.

been arguing, this is precisely the contrast between being a good accidentally and being a good essentially. The first sentence claims that no one has criticized injustice in itself: that is, criticized its effect on the soul. On my account, since the many think of acting unjustly as satisfying the natural appetitive desire for *pleonexia*, and of acting justly as frustrating it, of course they have never condemned the one and praised the other in themselves. But, as the argument has shown, once a person has conceded this much, it is clear that the consequences of appearing just are the same as the consequences of being just (that is, the benefits accrued to one's bodily well-being and to the well-being of one's possessions), and the consequences of really being unjust while seeming just outstrip by far the good consequences of being just. On top of that the agent gains the benefit of the desire satisfaction involved in acting unjustly. Thus the challenge to Socrates clearly emerges: explain how justice has some effect by itself on the soul that makes it worth being just; that it is the greatest good for the soul to have justice. How this could be the case is, I submit, entirely unclear at this point in the argument. Justice must be of some value to the soul that has not yet been considered.

In the following two chapters I shall consider Plato's central argument that justice is a good for the soul. It is the same type of argument for SV that we have seen throughout the dialogues: the soul is a locus of harm and benefit independently of the body and is of supreme importance. By definition, an excellent soul is virtuous, and a terrible, ruined, soul is vicious. What causes a soul to become excellent, or vicious, is the repeated performance of the corresponding type of actions. This much is clear in the *Gorgias*. What the argument of the *Republic* adds are crucial details. What does virtue do to the soul that makes virtue a good thing? The tripartite account of soul will provide a much more elaborate answer than the "account" Socrates provides in the *Gorgias*. Furthermore, in order for habituation to be effective, there must be some way of determining correctly which actions are truly virtuous.

CHAPTER 7

Early education and non-philosophers in the Republic

7.1 OVERVIEW

When Glaucon and Adeimantus demand that Socrates demonstrate that the just person is happier than the unjust, they are demanding that he show that justice is a good *for* the soul. Relying on ordinary, common, beliefs, they argue that the *consequences* of acting unjustly without a reputation for injustice are clearly advantageous. The just person without a just reputation ends up entirely bereft of material possessions, tortured, and finally killed – that is, deprived of absolutely all "external goods." By contrast, the unjust person who maintains a reputation for justice receives all of the good consequences of that reputation, namely, safety and security for himself and his material possessions, as well as the abundance of material possessions acquired through his unjust behavior, which can then be used to guarantee that one does not suffer any bad consequences in the afterlife by bribing the gods. On "the many's" account justice's and injustice's only value for the soul consists in desire satisfaction or frustration. On this score justice in itself is "painful" (ἐπίπονον) and "harsh" (χαλεπόν), since it thwarts a person's allegedly natural desire for *pleonexia*. Such a sacrifice of immediate desire may be worth it in circumstances where a person is too weak to ensure that he will not suffer injustice in turn. But since the good consequences of justice can be obtained equally well by successfully *seeming* to be just, such desire frustration, given propitious circumstances, might not be necessary. A person with Gyges' ring, for example, would be able to do whatever "he would want" (ἂν βούληται), thereby gaining the good in itself of the desire satisfaction involved in unjust action, in addition to the material and health benefits of unjust action (wealth, the best food, and so on). He also retains the benefits of the *reputation* of acting justly, which, as we saw, are identical to the benefits of actually being just. Thus an unjust person under these conditions has *all* of the goods. The only room left for

some value for acting justly lies in its having some hitherto unnoticed effect on the soul itself.

The argument in the *Republic* until 612b is explicitly supposed to be about the value of justice for the soul. If the argument of the previous chapter is correct, then we should expect that a complete and thorough reply by Socrates would defend four claims: (1) that there *is* a hitherto unnoticed good for the soul that is generated by just action; (2) that there is a corresponding bad for the soul generated by unjust action; (3) that the alleged goodness in itself of acting unjustly (desire satisfaction) is in fact not what it seems; and (4) that the alleged badness in itself of acting justly (desire frustration) is not what it seems. In this chapter and the next, I shall show that this is exactly what Socrates does. Relying on the habituation principle he argues that acting justly has a valuable effect on the soul: namely the achievement of a healthy, harmonious state of soul. Socrates then, beginning in Book 4 and continuing into Books 8 and 9, shows how the unjust person, to different degrees, lacks the healthy state of soul and possesses instead a disharmonious, unhealthy soul. Finally, in the arguments about pleasure at the end of Book 9, Socrates explains that in fact there are different types of desires to be satisfied and that only the virtuous person satisfies the greatest and most valuable types of desire, and thereby achieves the greatest and most valuable type of pleasure. Pleasure is important in the *Republic*, as it was in the *Gorgias*, because it is an example of a good in itself: that is, something that is good for the soul. Thus Socrates will show that, although it appears that the tyrant has desire satisfaction, in reality it provides him with no goods for the soul after all, since his desires are in truth the result of a sick and corrupt soul.

These arguments aim solely at establishing the aiming principle SV. A person should aim at doing the just/right action above all because this has the effect of making her just. And one should aim at being just because it is the healthy way to be, and also provides the desire satisfaction for the best and greatest desires. But none of this argument affects, nor is it intended to help with, what remains a central and pressing determining question: which actions *are* the just ones, and how can we determine them? I have argued earlier, and will elaborate here, that we cannot explain Plato's account by saying that he shifts focus from virtuous actions to virtuous persons. The description of the virtuous person provides the reasons *why* one ought to aim to be virtuous. But Cleitophon's puzzle still remains: which actions are virtuous/just? An answer to that is supplied by the middle books of the *Republic*. Truly just actions are just because of their participation in the

Form of Justice. The *content* of justice and of the good is unknowable (in Plato's sense) without knowledge of the Forms, the exclusive province of philosophers, which explains their capacity to rule properly and justifies their position as rulers.

I interpret the body of the *Republic* as an elaboration of a situation we are already familiar with from the "earlier" dialogues. As we have seen, Socrates distinguishes between the aiming principle SV and answering determining questions about what virtue is. He also claims to know SV, while disavowing knowledge of what virtue is. While his confident assertion of SV is plain, his argument for its truth has been brief and, in the *Crito* and *Gorgias*, based on the effect of virtuous actions on the soul. To act wrongly is to corrupt the most important part of oneself, one's soul. In order for Socrates to put his commitment to SV into action, we have seen that he needs to make a determination about what action is virtuous (or not contrary to virtue). It is central to the interpretation of the early dialogues that Socrates, lacking knowledge of what virtue is, cannot know that he is, in fact, doing the right thing, although he can know that he has always aimed at doing the right thing (as chapter one claims he argues in the *Apology*). His only way around this problem is the intervention of his divine sign, which is conceived of as an infallible source for answering the determining question in the here and now. We saw further (1.5) that Socrates does not criticize his fellow Athenians for lacking knowledge of virtue (which was his own situation and perhaps part of the human condition) but for not being committed to SV and/or for thinking that they knew what virtue was when they did not. The latter is illustrated vividly by the case of Euthyphro (4.3).

My contention is that these same themes and basic positions are elaborated and articulated more fully in the rest of the *Republic*. In brief the reading is as follows. In the Kallipolis, all of the citizens will be committed to SV, as Socrates is. Furthermore all of the citizens, except for the philosopher-kings, will be in a condition of Socratic wisdom: they will be aware that they do not know what virtue is. But they will also have the true belief that the philosophers know what virtue is. So the philosopher-kings in the Kallipolis play a role akin to that which Socrates' divine sign plays in the early dialogues. The citizens of the two lower classes of the Kallipolis do not know what virtue is, but neither do they think they know. They are ruled, however, by being properly convinced that the philosophers do know and that this is what entitles the philosophers to rule. The philosopher-kings then answer the outstanding determining questions for the citizens by using their knowledge of the Forms. The mass of citizens know that they ought to do the right thing above all, which is to do "their own," and

that this is the only way for them to have healthy, beautiful souls and to live in a healthy and beautiful polis, but they also are aware that they do not have knowledge for themselves of what the right thing to do is; for this, they rely on the philosopher-kings.

7.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EARLY EDUCATION

Not far into Socrates' search for justice in the city-state, Glaucon urges that they move beyond description of a mere "city for pigs" (372d). With little resistance Socrates agrees that it might not be a bad idea to consider a city "with a fever." The topic then quickly turns to the nature and proper education of the guards that such a city will require.[1] "A person who intends to be a fine and good guard of the city" (ὁ μέλλων καλός κἀγαθὸς ἔσεσθαι φύλαξ πόλεως) must be a lover of wisdom, spirited, and quick and strong (376c4–5). The emphasis is importantly on the future: these are the qualities a person must have who aims at being "fine and good" down the road. Thus they are necessary but not sufficient conditions for acquiring excellence; no one is simply born fine and good. It will be the task of a proper education and upbringing, a topic that occupies a significant portion of the *Republic*, to instill such excellence in individuals with the appropriate nature. The discussion of the proper education in Books 2 and 3 is not typically treated by those interested in the argument about justice. Scholars looking at this portion of the text in detail are usually concerned with Plato's relationship to poetry, and the political implications of his support for strong censorship in the state.[2] But I shall show that this section of the *Republic* articulates and establishes the critically important habituation principle, and also raises a puzzle for the overall argument of the *Republic* that relies on the aiming/determining distinction.

Proper education is the result of proper training, which consists in engaging in the proper activities. The noun ἐπιτήδευμα, "practice" or "pursuit," and its cognates are used throughout these discussions.[3] To engage in a practice is to perform a particular type of action repeatedly.[4] One can practice the specific virtues or vices. Socrates makes clear that it is the practicing of different sorts of activities that makes people into whatever they are,

[1] I follow Burnyeat (1999), 257, n. 3 in translating φύλακες as "guards" rather than the more traditional translation "guardian."

[2] See, e.g., Annas (1981), 79–108 and refs. below, n. 7.

[3] Forty times in Books 2–10.

[4] At *Ap.* 28b3–5, discussed in chapters one and three, Socrates' imagined questioner asks him whether he is not ashamed to have "pursued such a pursuit" (τοιοῦτον ἐπιτήδευμα ἐπιτηδεύσας) that now puts his life at risk.

whether cobbler, farmer, soldier, artist, or athlete (374b ff.). Engaging in the right activities, which is identical with having the right education, is most important for the young, since they are easily impressionable and will take on whatever stamp (τύπος) is impressed upon them (377a11–b2). It is critical to emphasize that it is the *doing* of particular actions that impresses the stamp on the souls of the young; activities affect both one's body and one's soul, and engaging in activities of a certain sort generates a person of a corresponding sort. Socrates says that the future guard must neither "do nor imitate" (πράττειν οὐδὲ μιμεῖσθαι, 395c3; cf. also c6) base characters or actions, thereby describing the danger of imitating bad actions as parallel to that of doing bad actions.[5] What makes "doing" and "imitating" problematic is that such conduct "settles into both habits and nature (εἰς ἔθη τε καὶ φύσιν), in body, speech, and thought" (395d2). This explains Plato's concern with "musical education"[6] in general, and imitation in particular, since he believes that both affect and effect a person's character. The habituation principle applies not only to ordinary actions but to the "acting" done in the course of musical education, and especially imitation.[7] Thus the habituation principle is an explicit part of the argument here in the *Republic*.[8] As Socrates emphasizes in the *Gorgias* (see 464a, 524d ff.), acting virtuously is so important because how we act leads either to the health

[5] Ferrari (1989), 116 emphasizes that the guards-to-be perform the poetry. Halliwell (2002), 52 too argues that imitation here involves the audience (i.e. the child undergoing the musical education) as a kind of performer and so it is something the young person *does*, not simply something he or she passively witnesses. This is brought out by the frequent use of ἐπιτηδεύειν and cognates. What this means is that "imitating" will be subject to the habituation principle just as much as acting, which explains why Plato is so concerned with it: it shapes our characters as much as what we "really" do. Cf. also *Rep.* 10, 603c5–9.

[6] "Musical education," the translation of μουσική, is a considerably broader idea than our "music." It consists not only in playing music and singing but in the study of poetry, and even, as we shall see, acting out parts in skits (see the prohibition on mimêsis, 392d ff.). To be μουσικός is to be cultured, well-read, and refined, not to be a musician in the contemporary sense (see 398e1). It is one of the three traditional parts of an Athenian education, along with "physical exercise" (γυμναστική) and "letters" (γραμματική). As above, musical education in this sense is not simply something a child passively listens to: he sings, acts, and learns to recite poetry. Despite the passive, "being educated" consists in an active engagement in certain sorts of activities.

[7] In English we say that film or theater actors "act" as do ordinary agents. Plato argues that both affect a person similarly; see *Rep.* 10, 606a–c. For discussion of the effects of poetry and imitation see especially Burnyeat (1999), Ferrari (1989), Halliwell (2002), and Nehamas (1982), (1988).

[8] Lear (1992/1998) argues persuasively that the psychology of the *Republic* involves processes of both "internalization" and "externalization." Internalization involves the effect of "cultural influences" on an individual's psyche. A person's education of course involves internalization. Lear does not discuss, however, what makes internalization possible, and how it is effected: the answer is the habituation principle. Culture or, in more Platonic terms, "the state" influences us because it makes possible and encourages certain types of activities and discourages and/or prevents others and, by the habituation principle, it is the engaging in particular types of actions that makes us particular types of people. For criticism of Lear's view see Ferrari (2003), esp. chs. 2 and 4.

or illness of one's soul, to its excellent condition or its corruption, and the condition of one's soul is of paramount importance.

We find the same account expressed more succinctly and stridently in the cross-examination of Homer in Book 10. Homer and the poets are accused of being mere "imitators" at "three removes" from reality (counting inclusively in Greek fashion, [1] Forms, [2] sensibles, [3] images) (597e). Socrates then says that he will not go through the individual crafts to see whether Homer is truly an expert at each of them, but skip straight to the "greatest and finest things" (μεγίστων τε καὶ καλλίστων, 599c6–7), which are "concerning wars and generalship and managing cities, and about the education of human beings" (πολέμων τε πέρι καὶ στρατηγιῶν καὶ διοικήσεων πόλεων, καὶ παιδείας πέρι ἀνθρώπου, 599c7–d2). Then Socrates turns to address Homer "directly," challenging him to rebut the claim that he is at "the third remove from truth about virtue" (τρίτος ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας εἶ ἀρετῆς πέρι, 599d3–4). We should note that the list of topics, including education, which is emphasized by being positioned at the end of the list and by repeating the preposition περί, is summed up by Socrates as "about virtue." So the real question Socrates is asking Homer is whether he is truly an expert at virtue, and thus would know how to educate people and make them virtuous (see 600c3–6, d6).[9] In the next line we learn that this would involve knowing "what pursuits make human beings better or worse in private and in public" (ποῖα ἐπιτηδεύματα βελτίους ἢ χείρους ἀνθρώπους ποιεῖ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ, 599d5–6).[10] Now this is the very question that Socrates and Glaucon are trying to answer in Books 2–3. By the time we reach Book 10 we will have learned about the Forms, and come to see the "real," i.e. sensible, world as a world at a "second" remove from reality. Nevertheless the criticism of Homer in Book 10 supports the reading of musical education defended here. In order to truly educate someone in virtue one must be able to determine which are the activities that lead a person to virtue. One cannot compose poetry that truly depicts virtuous actions and specifies virtuous pursuits without being able to answer the determining question about what a virtuous action is.[11]

9 See *Meno* 99b7–9 for the same criticism: "Thus [men like Themistocles and Anytus who lack knowledge] are not able to make others be like themselves inasmuch as they are not such people on account of knowledge." Cf. *Meno* 100a1–2, 6–7.

10 This idea is frequently centered around concern with the youth and focuses on what sort of "pursuits" (ἐπιτηδεύματα) and "lessons" (μαθήματα) they ought to engage in towards the proper shaping of their souls. See, e.g., *Euthyd.* 275a6, 275b3; *La.* 179d7, 180a4, 180c4, 182c2, 185e1, 186c5–d3; *Phdr.* 252e5, 253a4, 253b6; *Pr.* 327a3–4.

11 As we shall see below, this will be done in a knowledgeable way by the philosopher-kings, who have come to know the Forms.

Book 10 rejects Homer because he is deemed not to know which pursuits make people better or worse. But do Socrates and Glaucon?

The whole point of constructing a city "in theory" is, ostensibly, to see whether the nature of justice might be discovered more easily by looking first at the nature and origin of justice in this "bigger" object (see 368d–369a). Socrates and Glaucon then move from describing the types of people in a city to describing how to make the most important members of the city, the guards, excellent. In discussing what sort of education would make the guards as excellent as possible, they must rely on some idea of how virtue arises in individuals. In general terms the answer is by engaging in the right (virtuous) activities, listening to and imitating the right stories, and so on. Over the course of Books 2–3 Glaucon and Socrates discuss the proper content of stories, their proper style, appropriate rhythms, and proper types of painting, weaving, and architecture. Exposure to and engagement with excellent types of these stories and artworks yield excellent, graceful, and well-ordered souls.

But there is a complication: how do we determine which types are the excellent ones? This arises in particular with respect to the issue of the *content* of poetry, on which Socrates spends the most time (378e–392c). By listening to, repeating, and actively performing the activities of a proper musical education one develops a state of soul of the corresponding type. In order for poetry to achieve this goal, it must also depict virtuous people, and to do this, it must depict virtuous actions and show people acting in excellent ways and not depict people acting contrary to virtue. Stories and songs contribute to the formation of *virtuous characters* because they *truly depict virtuous actions*, and it is this latter feature that *makes* the stories virtuous and therefore appropriate to be told. Similarly, stories or scenes depicting non-virtuous behavior must be excised or banished from the city. It is only then that stories are able to have the desired educative effect.[12]

The question of determining which actions *are* virtuous and which are *not* (to be depicted or not in virtue-engendering music and poetry) is thus central to and problematic for any account of a proper education. Socrates and company are concerned to find, and will find by the end of Book 4, what it is to be a just person – a task that will allegedly be made easier by

[12] Why couldn't a story contribute to the formation of a virtuous character by depicting *vicious* actions, which then cause people by revulsion to be virtuous? We must remember that for Plato participating in *mousikê* is a matter of *mimêsis*, which, as we saw above, involves a person actively participating (by singing, dancing, acting) in the work. So depicting vicious actions would involve some young person in acting out a vicious part, thereby harming his or her character (see 395e–396e). Apparently Plato thinks something similar is true even for less participatory forms of art, such as painting and architecture (401b3–d2).

first finding justice in the state. But now we see that, in searching for justice in the state, they first need to discuss how to generate virtues in individuals, and this leads us, via the habituation principle, to a question about which pursuits and actions are the right ones, since it is by engaging in those actions, or more relevantly in this context by watching, performing, and imitating such actions, that people become virtuous in the first place.[13]

7.3 A TENSION IN THE ACCOUNT OF EARLY EDUCATION

I shall argue in what follows that there is a concern, explicit in the text, about begging both aiming and determining questions. When Socrates, Glaucon, and Adeimantus assume that the guards ought to be virtuous and that virtue consists in the ordinary, traditional, virtues – piety, courage, temperance, etc. – they beg the question whether one ought to aim to instill these. When they attempt to describe the content, style, musical rhythms, etc. of the stories that will instill these virtues, they beg determining questions about content. We shall see that Socrates carefully qualifies the account of education, and that it looks forward not only to the tripartite division of the soul in Book 4, which will begin to answer the outstanding aiming question, but also to Books 5–7, which will resolve the determining question – or at least tell us how such questions *could* be resolved.

The text signals this tension. Since musical education is about the proper molding of the soul (376e4, 377c3–5), what is critical is not that the story be true, but that it be "fine" (καλόν, 377c1). Fine stories yield fine souls. Socrates proceeds to describe the proper types of stories to tell about the gods. Some stories, like the punishing of fathers by their sons, should not be told – are not fine – even if they are true. Others should not be told, and are false: namely, stories about the gods fighting one another. The first stories a child hears must be as fine as possible to lead him "to/towards virtue" (πρὸς ἀρετήν) (378e1–3). Adeimantus then wants to know what these stories are (378e5–6). He is calling for a determination to be made. But, from the perspective of the outer frame, if Socrates knows what the finest stories are – i.e., those that lead a child to virtue – then he must know what virtue is. So we are faced with a familiar problem. There is

[13] Readers may be concerned that the education described here will later be denigrated as effecting only a "political" (see 430a–c) or "habitual" virtue (see 522a), and not the true virtue that will be the possession of philosophers alone. I shall nevertheless persist in saying that this early education inculcates virtue, since that is how Socrates discusses this as well (see the discussion above about the argument with Homer in Book 10 and the passages cited in the following section). I shall address the difference between the virtue generated by this early education and the virtue of the rare persons who complete the philosophical education in 8.2 and 8.3.

agreement with the idea that the aim of education is to make the children as excellent as possible (this follows from SV), but there is then a need to determine what education, consisting of what sorts of stories and activities, makes them so. A careful reader ought to be puzzled by the direction the argument is taking. Overall, the discussion is supposed to discover what a particular virtue is, namely justice, but here Socrates is providing an outline of what sort of stories and practices are in fact the excellent ones.

He makes this determination by claiming certain truths about the gods. The gods adhere unerringly to SV, and since they are gods, they are perfect and never err or do wrong. The gods are responsible for absolutely no bad things, only good ones (379b ff.). Socrates' account relies on the distinction between aiming and determining questions. Criticizing poetry that attributes bad actions to the gods, he maintains that, since bad things are not caused by the gods, poetry should not say that they are. He explains, however, that if and when destructive actions *are* the work of gods, it must be because the destructive actions of the gods are really "good and just" (δίκαιά τε καὶ ἀγαθά, 380b1). Those suffering divine punishment are not made "wretched" but benefit; to say that the gods do bad things, and not simply destructive things, which are in fact truly good and just, is to speak impiously (380c). How does Socrates know this? When he claims that such a story would be impious, is he saying something inconsistent with his position in the *Euthyphro*, when he denied that he knew what was pious and what was impious? He does not say that he has some way of determining in all cases what is pious and what impious. As we saw in chapter one, however, Socrates does claim to know SV. His conclusion about perfect divine behavior follows from that. Since the gods are perfectly good *ex hypothesi*, they know what virtue is and never act contrary to it. Thus Socrates can know that a story that attributes bad actions to gods is false simply from his knowledge of SV. But he is careful here, as he was in the *Crito*, not to conclude from this that the gods never act, for example, destructively. All he can know, consistently with the other dialogues, is that, if a god acts destructively, it is because that is the virtuous thing to do. We must be careful not to moralize: just because an act is destructive of something or someone does not make that act *ipso facto* wrong.

Having provided the outline for the proper stories about the gods, at the start of Book 3 Socrates concludes, relying on the habituation principle, that children who are educated by poetry in accord with his guidelines will be pious: they will honor the gods, their parents, and the relations between one another (386a). Socrates then moves on to courage (386a–388e), decency and honesty (388e–389d), and temperance (389d–392a). Without going through

each of these accounts in detail, we should recognize that they focus on instilling a virtue in a person through his repeating, learning, and imitating virtuous actions as depicted in song. In the case of courage the poetry must work to prevent a person from thinking of death as a horrible thing that requires excessive mourning. Why? Because then one would be tempted to aim above all to avoid death for oneself and one's friends, rather than to aim at what is excellent; the very temptation Socrates (boastfully and rather vulgarly, as he himself admits) says he couldn't care less about compared with virtue in the *Apology* (32d). The same holds later for poetry which describes food, drink, sex, or money in glowing terms (390a ff.).

Throughout this discussion Glaucon offers no resistance to these ideas. Of course, he agrees that the guards must be virtuous and Socrates is merely proceeding through the virtues in order, and describing what sort of musical education is best at instilling them in the guards-to-be. But is everything in fact as innocent as it seems to Glaucon? Socrates is supposed to be looking for justice in the city, so that he can determine what justice is in an individual. But now he is simply helping himself to a traditional list of virtues, assuming that they ought to be instilled, and describing the types of stories that will instill those virtues *in individuals*. Commentators concerned with the defense of justice typically skip forward to the account of the virtues later in Book 4 (442b ff.), which explains where the virtues are located and how they operate in the tripartite soul. But the preceding extended description of education from the later parts of Book 2 into Book 3 shows the importance of engaging in the right activities in order to establish the very psychic relations that will later be described. As in other dialogues, Socrates helps himself to ordinary examples of virtuous behavior without providing any account of how what is really virtuous is to be determined. But at the same time as this question is passed over in the discussion, its importance is highlighted, for a virtuous character is established by engaging in virtuous activity. We must then have a way of determining which activities and stories are virtuous (and which are not) if we want to make the guards, or anyone else for that matter, virtuous. Since the problem of the content of virtuous actions and stories looms as large as ever, we are far from replacing an act-centered account with an agent-centered one. How does Socrates know which precise stories are going to be the right ones, the ones that will truly instill courage, temperance, and, in a word, virtue, without knowing what virtue is?

Glaucon and Adeimantus go along without a peep perhaps because, as they said at least five times in Book 2, they are already convinced of the value of justice and virtue (358c6, 360c5, 360d2, 361e2, 367a7–8); they do not

defend the Thrasymachean position *in propria persona*. But the text signals that they should not be so compliant. Enthusiastically following along, Glaucon and Adeimantus are perfectly ready to continue on to justice, when Socrates pulls them up short:

> What then is the kind [εἶδος] of stories we have left, I [Socrates] said, about which we still need to determine the ones that ought to be told and the ones that ought not? For what ought to be told about the gods has been said, and also about daimons and heroes and matters in Hades.
> Very much so, [said Adeimantus].
> Is what is left, therefore, [what sorts of stories ought to be told] about people [περὶ ἀνθρώπων]?
> Clearly. (392a3–9)

This is only a partly accurate account of what has been going on since the late parts of Book 2 (377a ff.). There have indeed been quotations from poetry about gods, daimons, heroes, and the underworld. The passage suggests, however, that the point of Socrates' discussion all along has been to proceed through appropriate stories distinguished by whom the stories were about, and that the remaining subject requiring treatment is human beings. It is true that at the beginning (379a5–6) Socrates discusses what sort of stories ought to be told about the gods. The point of this, however, was to provide an outline for the "most fine" type of poetry that would instill virtue in the guards who practiced it (378e). At the opening of Book 3, it can sound as though Socrates has completed the task of discussing appropriate stories about the gods: "about the gods, these are the sorts of things, as it seems, that one ought to hear and ought not to, from childhood on" (386a1–2). But these stories are not only or most importantly about the gods. They are also stories whose aim is to instill *piety*, which involves the proper relationships to gods, parents, and even to one another, as Socrates himself says at that point (386a). He then moves on to stories that involve the underworld, and heroes, but this again is explicitly in the service of describing the types of tales that will, and the types that will not, instill *courage* – indeed, the argument begins by Socrates asking, "What then if they [the future guards] are to be courageous?" (386a6). There is no mention then of moving from a discussion about gods to one about heroes. As he turns to the category of proper behavior (not laughing excessively and truth-telling), he criticizes any poet who represents "worthwhile *people*" (ἀνθρώπους ἀξίους, 388e9) as engaging in uncontrolled laughter. He then also quotes lines about gods (388e–389a). Socrates thus does what he says he hasn't done in the above passage: he discusses an appropriate story about people, not just about gods,

heroes, and so forth.[14] The overall point is clearly that whoever is going to serve as an example in the stories and poems – whether it is a god, man, woman, hero, demi-god or whoever – he or she must act virtuously. Beings that are admirable should not be depicted acting less than excellently. What distinguishes the discussion of the content of different types of poems is not so much whether they are about gods, heroes, or men, but whether the content instills the virtue in question: from piety to courage, to decency and honesty, to moderation.

If stories about the gods and heroes can exemplify pious, courageous, and temperate actions, couldn't they offer examples of just actions with equal perspicuity? It is true that stories about justice are thought of as stories about human beings as opposed to gods.[15] But, just as the traditional stories about gods have them engaged in excessive sexual lust and so should be excised (390b–c), there are also clear examples of traditional stories of divine injustice. Indeed some of the stories that are actually referred to could easily be taken to illustrate examples of justice or injustice. The quote from Aeschylus that ends Book 2 (383b) is plausibly considered to be more about injustice and betrayal than about uttering a falsehood; it is one thing for Apollo to have said falsely that Achilles would live a long life (the point Socrates refers to in the middle of the quote [383b5]), it is quite another for *he himself* to kill Achilles. It would be simple to use this as an illustration of Apollo acting unjustly towards Thetis.[16]

From the perspective of the outer frame, an attentive reader ought to grasp that the issue of the *content* of virtue, of its determination, is still outstanding. Socrates, Glaucon, and Adeimantus are happily on the way to describing the sort of stories that would, and those that would not, cause the guards to be just. But, as though caught unawares, Socrates must interrupt the flow of argument to remind the brothers that they cannot simply proceed next to discuss the stories that would instill justice (392a–c) – a discussion that would naturally follow the accounts of which stories instill piety, courage, decency and honesty, and temperance. First however he goes so far as to describe the types of stories that they *would* censor in order to make the guards just: about unjust men who are happy and just men who

[14] See 387d1–2, where Socrates discusses the omission of lamentations of "men of repute" (τῶν εὐλογίμων ἀνδρῶν); cf. also 390d2, d7. It is possible that these expressions refer to "heroes" and not "people," but 390d7–e1 refers to τοὺς ἄνδρας. Furthermore, while the beginning of Book 3 paid lip service to being done with stories "about the gods" (the task begun at 379a), repeated mention is made after that of other appropriate stories about the gods (388b–d, 389a, 390e, 390b–c) until 392a.

[15] See *Eu.* 12e5–8, *Gor.* 507a–b, and McPherran (1996), 48–51.

[16] See the poem "ΑΠΙΣΤΙΑ" by C. Cavafy, who quotes this passage from the *Republic*, in Keeley and Sherrard (1975), 28.

are wretched, and any that claim that undetected injustice is profitable or that justice is the good of another – that is, they would help themselves to the Socratic conception of justice. When Socrates asks whether this is what they would say, Adeimantus replies, "I know well it is" (392b7). Glaucon and Adeimantus seem already to have forgotten their movingly eloquent but avowedly ad hominem defense of injustice. Socrates responds that if they in fact said such things about what just stories were like, they would then beg the question of their entire investigation into justice (392b8–9). He then concludes:

> Therefore we will agree about what sort of stories ought to be told about human beings at that time when we have found what sort of thing justice is and how it by nature profits the one having it, whether he seems to be just or not. (392c1–4)

This is quite surprising and should make the reader rethink what has been going on up to this point. Why is justice so special and problematic? Indeed, Socrates has just described what they would say about the appropriate stories for instilling justice, and Adeimantus has agreed.[17] In the earlier dialogues Socrates has problems determining what *any* of the virtues is, not only justice. Here in the *Republic* he addresses *both* why we should aim at being virtuous/just *and* how we can determine its content. I think that Plato means the reader to see that the problem raised about the content of stories that would instill justice should, by parity of reasoning, taint *all* of the previous discussions about how to instill the other virtues as well. For why would one necessarily want to instill *them*, and what would be the content of the stories that would instill them? Does either Socrates or Adeimantus (or Glaucon) have knowledge of those virtues so that they could accurately say which sort of activities and stories are the correct ones? Callicles would certainly not think that stories instilling temperance, as ordinarily conceived, should be told; neither is it plausible that Glaucon's and Adeimantus' person with Gyges' ring would engage in temperate or pious (as opposed to pious-seeming) behavior.

In the treatment of meter and harmony that follows once they leave the content and style of poetry behind, there is discussion of the types

[17] Someone might object that the point here is to see that justice is in some important way different from virtues like moderation, courage, piety, decency, and the other qualities that are instilled via this early musical education. But later on, in a notorious passage from Book 4 (442d–443b), Socrates proceeds to describe the actions that a just person would refrain from, and they include many actions that have already been excised from permissible poetry, appearing to fall under the general category of "wrongdoing": embezzling, committing sacrilege, stealing, betraying, being unfaithful, committing adultery, neglecting parents or gods. It is striking that this list includes actions that are described as impious and contrary to the quality of truth-telling in Books 2–3. Piety is not a virtue mentioned separately in the Book 4 list together with courage, wisdom, moderation, and justice.

of music that will again yield ordered, courageous, and fine characters, but justice is always conspicuously absent.[18] When Socrates and his interlocutors try to specify what sorts of rhythms correspond to what sorts of characters, the technical details get quite complex. They decide to leave the determination to Damon, the expert, but one issue is beyond dispute: gracefulness (εὐσχημοσύνη) is generated from good rhythms and the lack of grace from bad (400c8–10). In other words, the habituation principle holds, as of course does their commitment to goodness and virtue. But to determine what is in fact a truly good rhythm, which generates a truly good character, requires an expert in music and also, the text suggests, an expert at what sort of person one ought to be – that is, an expert at virtue.[19]

Before Socrates turns to the proper training of the body (γυμναστική), he summarizes why proper musical education as a whole is so important:

Then Glaucon, I said, isn't it for these reasons [τούτων ἕνεκα] that education in "music" is supremely authoritative [κυριωτάτῃ]: because both rhythm and harmony most of all sink down into the inside of the soul and, carrying to it [αὐτῆς] [i.e., the soul] gracefulness [εὐσχημοσύνην], take hold most vigorously and make [the person] graceful [ποιεῖ εὐσχήμονα], if someone educates [him] correctly [ἐάν τις ὀρθῶς τραφῇ] – but if not, then the opposite [happens]; and moreover, the one having been educated there [ὁ ἐκεῖ τραφείς][20] as he ought to have been would perceive most acutely the things that fall short, things that are not finely made or not finely grown, and, correctly [ὀρθῶς] feeling distaste [for them], he would, on the one hand, praise and be pleased at fine things and, accepting them into his soul, he would be nourished [τρέφοιτ' ἄν] by them and would become fine and good [καλός τε κἀγαθός]. And, on the other hand, shameful things he

[18] See 399b8, 399 c3, 400a1, 401a7–8.

[19] Shorey (1930), ad loc., thinks that there is some joking around here. Be that as it may, the important point for me is that they are appealing to an expert who has knowledge of these matters, even if they might be mocking Damon as the real expert. Further, in addition to the reasons Shorey mentions, it seems plausible that some mockery is involved insofar as the requisite knowledge will not only be technical knowledge of music, but knowledge of the character one ought to have.

[20] I do not think "there" refers to "in music," as commentators and translators take it, but to "in one's soul." See Adam (1902), 167. Shorey (1930) and Grube/Reeve in Cooper (1997) follow. I can find no parallel passage in the *Republic* where "there" is used to refer to something like a subject matter; but cf. *Laws* 643c7. Its first appearances in the *Republic* (330d8, e3) is in Cephalus' speech in Book 1, where he uses it in the standard Greek metaphorical sense to refer to Hades. Plato then extends its metaphorical reach to some other oppositions: city/person (e.g., 434d4, d7, e3), soul/body (e.g., 404e3, 591e2), intelligible/sensible realms (e.g., 500d4, 611d7), here/now in the text/conversation as opposed to above/earlier (e.g., 441b4, 509a1). In this passage the reference of ἐκεῖ is better understood as "in his soul," as it is just further on in the text (404e3), picking up on the point at the beginning of the passage that rhythm and harmony sink down in the soul, thereby making the person graceful. With hindsight we might think of Plato's expansion on the great metaphorical "there" of Greek culture – Hades – by using it to refer to the intelligible realm of Forms in Books 5–7 and in the Myth of Er (see, e.g., 614b7, d2, e5).

would correctly [ὀρθῶς] castigate and hate while still young, before he was able to grasp the account [λόγον],[21] but when the account comes along, the one who has been educated in this way [ὁ οὕτω τραφείς] would welcome it most of all, recognizing it on account of kinship. (401d4–402a4)

I believe that this passage, along with the one quoted below (402b9–c8), foreshadows later parts of the *Republic* on which they rely in order to be more fully comprehensible. The person properly educated in his soul by *mousikê* will be able to perceive both artifacts and natural things that fall short of being fine. The idea that a thing falls short of an ideal, falls short of what is truly fine, will of course be important in the account of Forms. Being able to identify things as "falling short" of the way they should be is the province of the philosopher, who knows the difference between Forms and sensibles as described in Books 5–7 and in the *Phaedo* (see 74b–75d). The philosopher understands how and to what extent the sensible world falls short of the ideal, intelligible, realm.

Furthermore the upshot of this education is to prepare the young person for delighting in the "reason when it comes along," although at this point he or she is not yet able to get it – a rather cryptic idea that seems to come out of nowhere and not be explicable in terms of what the reader knows thus far. With hindsight, however, the remark becomes more intelligible. At 522a, as Socrates is about to describe the educational program for those who are able to attempt to become philosopher-kings, he refers back to his and Glaucon's earlier descriptions of education in "music" and "physical exercise," and wonders whether these will be sufficient for achieving the knowledge of the Forms, which they have just finished describing via the image of the Cave. Glaucon there says that musical education instructed the guards by "habits" (ἔθεσι, 522a4–5), but not by giving them knowledge. This later passage seems to refer back to the earlier one, where the "young" person has been habituated to delight in what is fine, but does not have the "reason" yet.[22] What is the *logos* that is supposed to "come along" later? Clearly the Forms. Musical education by itself, lacking the accounts, that is, lacking knowledge of the Forms, only develops habits and provides for "grace" not "knowledge." In Book 6, Socrates criticizes the current practice of studying philosophy as stopping short of the most difficult part: "the part concerning accounts" (τὸ περὶ τοὺς λόγους, 498a4). We learn finally

[21] As Brown (2004), 286 notices, this line appears to anticipate Aristotle's claim that the well-brought up student either already has or "can easily get" first principles in ethics (*NE* 1.4 1095b3–8), which provide "the because."

[22] Cf. also *Rep*. 10, 606a5, for the idea that being educated by habits is not the same as being educated by *logos*.

in Book 7 that what provides the "account" is dialectic, and this is what yields understanding (νοῦς):[23]

Do you not call the person dialectical who can get the account of the being of each thing [τὸν λόγον ἑκάστου λαμβάνοντα τῆς οὐσίας]? And the one who does not have it, insofar as he is not able to give an account (λόγον) to himself or to someone else, to that extent won't you say that he does not have understanding (νοῦν) of it? (534b3–6)

This passage makes intelligible the above phrase, "when the account comes along." Of course it will not come along to all, or even most, of the guards. My point is that here we have a foreshadowing of the later education of the philosopher-kings, that specially qualified subset of the guards. It suggests that it is only once the philosopher-kings have their knowledge that we can say definitively which actions and activities the education described in Books 2–3 actually should include. And, to anticipate, this will be because it is knowledge of the Forms that provides the philosopher-kings with the ability to answer at last the outstanding determining questions.

Although Glaucon readily agrees that Socrates is right about the importance of musical education, Socrates then explains how their entire account of education since 378 in Book 2 must nevertheless be qualified. He draws an analogy by appealing to the necessity of knowing individual letters for knowing how to read. He then says that the same is true for images (εἰκόνες) of the letters as well: we will not be able to identify them if we do not know the letters themselves. Notice that this focuses on the determining question: in order to determine what the images of the letters are, we must know the letters themselves. This is not about being persuaded of the importance or value of learning one's letters in the first place.

An apparent allusion to the distinction between Forms and sensibles seems to develop in the controversial speech that follows:

Then, by the gods, am I [Socrates] not right in saying that in this way too [as in the previous example of letters] we shall never be true "musicians" – neither we ourselves nor the guards whom we say we must educate [οὔτε αὐτοὶ οὔτε οὓς φαμεν ἡμῖν παιδευτέον εἶναι τοὺς φύλακας] – until we recognize [γνωρίζομεν] the forms of temperance, courage, freedom of spirit, and magnificence and as many kindred of these as there are, and their opposites as well that circulate around

[23] Even though the definition of knowledge as true belief plus an account (see *Meno* 98a) is not explicitly in the *Republic*, it fits quite well. The person educated by music will have true beliefs about what is fine and good, but he will not have knowledge of it until he gets the accounts, which turn out to be the Forms. Of course, as I shall discuss below, only a small subset of those given the general education of the guards will be able to ascend all the way through the course in dialectic, which yields knowledge of the Forms.

everywhere [πανταχοῦ περιφερόμενα], and until we perceive [αἰσθανώμεθα] them in the things in which they are, both themselves and their images, and we disregard [ἀτιμάζωμεν] them neither in small matters nor in great, but we believe [οἰώμεθα] that [grasp of them] is part of the same skill and discipline?

The conclusion is inevitable, he [Glaucon] said. (402b9–c8)

This is a difficult and surprising passage, which has caused consternation among scholars insofar as it initially appears to refer to transcendent Forms[24] and their images almost seventy-five Stephanus pages before the passage in which they are typically understood to be first introduced (476a).[25] Indeed there are good reasons for denying that the forms referred to here are the transcendent Forms of the middle books, aside from the question-begging explanation that they have yet to be "introduced": (1) they are many, not one;[26] (2) they are "in" sensibles, rather than separate from them;[27] (3) they are in motion and perceivable.[28] These reasons all focus on the description of the metaphysical nature of the entities in question, and I agree that they are conclusive.[29] We should nevertheless appreciate how intimately these immanent, moving, forms are connected to the more familiar transcendent ones.[30] At 476a, when we are unquestionably introduced to the unique transcendent Forms, the language seems to pick right up from our present passage:

The same account [ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος] holds about the just and unjust and good and bad and about all of the Forms: on the one hand, each itself is one, but, on the other, because of its association with actions [πράξεων], bodies, and one another everywhere each [of the Forms] manifests itself in many appearances [πανταχοῦ φανταζόμενα πολλὰ φαίνεσθαι ἕκαστον].[31] (476a5–8)

24 I shall continue the practice of capitalizing the initial "f" in "Form" to indicate the transcendent, unique, Forms, and leave a lower-case "f" when εἶδος does not refer to those entities or when it is ambiguous.

25 Contrast Zeller (1922), 560, n., who cites this passage as support for the "unwidersprechlich" claim that Plato has his doctrine of Forms in mind from the beginning. Since I am arguing that Forms are going to be critical to the final solution of the puzzles raised about education in Books 2 and 3, I am in agreement that Plato has Forms in mind from the beginning of the *Republic*, although I would not go so far as to say that this passage by itself makes this indisputable.

26 Nehamas (1982), 276, n. 61; Reeve (1988), 52.

27 Adam (1902): 1, 168; Nehamas (1982), 260.

28 Morrison (1977), 217; Reeve (1988), 52. Cf. also Malcolm (1981).

29 Reeve (1988), 52–3 maintains that they are properties, however, which also must have images that are distinct from them. He proceeds to call the images of these properties "qualities," and the properties themselves "modes." Furthermore, both of these, Reeve believes, are distinct from the transcendent Forms. He argues for attributing this complex ontology to Plato in ch. 2.

30 Morrison (1977) too sees that the passage is important for understanding Plato's metaphysics and ontology. As far as I know, only Ferrari (1989), 121 attempts to say something about the implications of the connection to Forms here for larger ethical and political issues. I understand the broader significance of the passage rather differently. See below.

31 Perhaps this weakens Reeve's (1988), 52–3 claim that the earlier passage is not at all about Forms; Reeve never considers this passage.

Now that the object of the philosopher's knowledge is being introduced we learn that it has two aspects: on the one hand it is itself one thing, but on the other, as in 402b–c, it appears in many things, being "everywhere." Whatever their precise metaphysical status is, it seems clear that the nature of the plural forms at 402b–c stems in turn from their relation to the transcendent Forms first mentioned here. It is because of the Forms' association with actions, bodies, and one another that we have these moving forms everywhere. So the ultimate explanation of the forms that are necessary for being truly "musical" requires reference to transcendent Forms, even granting that they are not explicitly mentioned in the earlier passage, for they are the real source of each of the immanent forms being the form that it is.

Nevertheless, there are two apparent problems with thinking that transcendent Forms are in play at 402b–c, even at one remove, which do not concern the differing metaphysical nature of transcendent and immanent forms. The first is that the passage concerns musical, not philosophical, education. The transcendent Forms, however, are only part of the latter; the former is a "fairly low-level achievement, far removed from a philosophical understanding of the Forms; that only comes years later, to a select few."[32] The second worry is that, if the forms here are the Forms, then it seems that artists would be imitating the Forms directly, thereby contradicting the account in Book 10 (see 597e3–4) which claims that the poet/painter operates at the "third" remove from reality by imitating objects in the world which are themselves images of Forms.[33] I shall deal with these two objections separately, although we shall see that they are related in important and interesting ways.

To understand 402b–c we need to pay attention to the repeated use of the first-person plural and the passage's marked distinction between the "we" (most narrowly, Socrates and Glaucon) and "those we must educate" (the future guards). While it is of course correct that musical education itself will not include knowing the transcendent Forms, *someone* must know the transcendent Forms if the musical education that will be given to the guards is going to be truly correct. As the passage says, neither Socrates and Glaucon, nor those they are to educate, will be truly "musical" until "*we*" recognize the forms.[34] Although the guards do not have to know the

[32] Burnyeat (1999), 283, n. 51. See also Morrison (1977), 217.

[33] See Adam (1902): I, 168.

[34] This passage arises again in the context of curbing Glaucon's tendency to assume things that are not yet established. At 398e1, when Socrates is inquiring into the effects of different sorts of harmonies and rhythms, he asks Glaucon for input, "for you are musical" (μουσικός). Here we see the play between a narrow notion of musical, which applies to what we would call "music," and the broader

forms, knowledge of them is necessary for establishing definitively a truly correct musical education for the guards to undergo. But who exactly is this "we"?[35] Although it is clearly Socrates and Glaucon at present, it will be the philosopher-kings who will have to know the Forms so that they can set up the correct actions and activities that will constitute true musical education, with poetry that is properly excised, with the right rhythms and harmonies, and so on. We shall see below that Socrates strongly qualifies the status of the musical education as they have just outlined it.

The second problem is dealt with similarly, once we see that the passage is not saying that guards or poets *themselves* must know the Forms – just that *someone* must. In the Kallipolis, properly set up by the philosopher-kings in accordance with the Forms, poets will write their poetry in imitation of the just and good city which has been established by the rulers and in accordance with the correct guidelines for poetry. For this city to come into being someone must look to the Forms, but it will not be the *painters* but, in the image we will see below, the philosopher-kings who are going to "paint" the city in the image of the Forms. Thus there is a kind of double-founding of the city at work, which enables the necessary bootstrapping. The "founders" (Socrates and Glaucon) will, they hope, create an educational program that will enable appropriately gifted students to ascend to knowledge of the Form of the Good (which they themselves do not have), and then these students, as we shall see, will actually found the Kallipolis by making the city and its institutions in the image of the Forms, and thus establish

idea of a person being "musical" in the sense of being cultured and, as we would say, "well-read" or "well-educated." To call Glaucon "unmusical" (ἄμουσος) would be an insult. At 402b–c, however, he explains that being "musical" is more complex than it first appears and that in fact he and Glaucon are not really in a position to know that Glaucon or anyone else is truly "musical" insofar as they do not know what a truly musical education is. This is a shockingly revisionary idea in that everyone in the audience of the inner frame (and most probably of the outer frame) would consider himself obviously "cultured."

[35] Reflecting on this question goes quite deeply into the structure of the *Republic* and into the interpretation of it presented here. Throughout the work there is an element of "boot-strapping" involved in the position of, especially, Socrates and Glaucon, and the issue of whether and how the Kallipolis could ever come into being. Plato uses the words "founders" (οἰκισταί) three times: twice at 379a1, and once at 519c8. In the first passage, Socrates says that as "founders" their job is not to actually compose poems (the task of the poets) but to know the "outlines" (τύπους) in accordance with which poetry ought to be composed. (The significance of this claim is augmented when we recall that just before (377b2) Socrates has explained that it is a type or stamp (τύπος) that is impressed into the souls of the young.) In the second passage from Book 7, Socrates says that it is the task of "us founders" to compel those who are able to ascend to knowledge of the Form of the Good, and then to make sure that they do not remain there, but return to the "Cave." I shall say more about this passage later in the chapter, but what is important is that Socrates is not including himself and Glaucon as philosopher-kings – he has already disavowed knowledge of the Form of the Good (505a). See below.

definitively the education and institutions which Socrates and Glaucon are only in a position to establish *tentatively*.[36] Thus the allusion to Forms here – even at one remove – does not in any way conflict with Book 10's claim that the painter and poet operate at the "third remove" from reality.

I am arguing then that in the present passage Socrates says that we cannot know that this sketch of musical education, which is supposed to instill at least habituated virtue in the guards, is the right one until we know the forms (and ultimately the transcendent Forms) of those virtues. Without such knowledge, which Socrates consistently disavows throughout the *Republic* just as he has in the "earlier" dialogues, they cannot know that the details of the education they have outlined – which rhythms to follow, which lines of poetry to excise – are correct. Socrates has outlined a program of education that he thinks might lead to the acquisition of excellence, relying on common beliefs about what its content is. But he consistently denies that he knows that content, and now refers to a special metaphysical content, vague though its nature is, that is necessary in order to know what virtue is.

We find further support for this interpretation at the end of Book 3. Glaucon remains too quick to believe that they have established more than they have, just as he was ready earlier to proceed to the stories that would instill justice:[37]

> [Socrates:] And would they [the future guards] not have been provided with the greatest safeguard if they have been in reality [τῷ ὄντι] finely [καλῶς] educated?
>
> But indeed they surely have been, he [Glaucon] said.
>
> And I said, it is not right [οὐκ ἄξιον] [for us] to affirm *this* confidently, dear Glaucon. But what we were just now saying it *is* right [for us to affirm confidently]: that they must have the right education, *whatever it is*.[38] (416b5–c1)

We see once again that Socrates curbs Glaucon's attempt to claim knowledge about the correct content of the educational program, reiterating the caution emphasized in the previous passage (402b–c). An education that is "in reality" fine will yield truly fine characters. But they cannot affirm that they have discovered that. Why not? As I shall argue further below, because

[36] Scott (2000) develops a related but quite different idea of "revisitation."

[37] He will do this yet again at the end of Book 4 (445a–b) when he believes that, once they have described the state of the just person's soul, they have completed the reply to the Thrasymachean position.

[38] Shorey (1930), 309, n. d comments: "This is not so much a reservation in reference to higher education as a characteristic refusal of Plato to dogmatize." I argue that there is something more specific happening here. There is a reservation about the correct *content* of this education, which, we will eventually learn, must await the knowledge of the philosopher-king in order to be conclusively settled.

it requires knowledge of the Forms to answer the outstanding determining questions about what will constitute the activities and actions of a truly proper education that will truly instill the true virtues.[39]

Socrates' role with Glaucon is a familiar one: he is trying to generate in him some "Socratic wisdom" by making him aware of his own ignorance. Socratic wisdom will be an important part of the interpretation of the middle books. The *Republic* as a whole ought to yield some Socratic wisdom in the audience of both its inner and outer frames. In fact I shall argue below that the Kallipolis requires all (or almost all) of its citizens to have Socratic wisdom: they need to be aware that they are ignorant of the Forms so that they will be persuaded to accept the rule of the philosophers. Moreover, although readers may find this surprising, I shall argue that in fact all the citizens of the Kallipolis will be led, in a way, by reason.

This sets the stage too for how I want to understand the argument of Book 4 in chapter eight. When Socrates turns to the "definitions" of the virtues in the city and in the individual, the question of how to determine substantively which activities and subjects generate virtue is still outstanding. When Socrates turns to the "definition" and "defense" of justice in Book 4, he is not concerned with this determining question. He offers a new and complex account of the state of the soul of the just person, which is part of the elaborate defense of the aiming principle SV. But as we shall see, it cannot help with the outstanding determining questions about actions and activities, nor was that ever its point. We will know which actions are the virtuous ones once a person, a philosopher, knows the Forms. We have seen that the seeds for this have already been planted for an attentive reader in Books 2 and 3. The connection between the *Republic* and the earlier dialogues, as well as its internal unity, is illuminated by the aiming/determining distinction.

7.4 PHILOSOPHERS AND NON-PHILOSOPHERS IN THE *REPUBLIC*

In chapter five I argued that the distinction between aiming and determining questions helps to make sense of the course of the arguments in Book 1. In the present chapter I have shown so far that resolving determining questions is a standing concern throughout the account of early education. Before turning to the account of justice in Book 4, I need to explain some of the differences between the philosophers and the

[39] Again, on the extent to which the virtue instilled by early education is less than "full" virtue, see 8.2–3.

non-philosophers of the Kallipolis in order to understand the difference between the virtue of philosophers and non-philosophers. The much-debated question of whether anyone besides philosophers can be virtuous is complicated by the aiming/determining distinction. For we have seen in the earlier dialogues that Socrates himself distinguishes between being committed to SV and having the knowledge of what virtue is (see chapters one and four). If one is unwaveringly committed to SV, then one is motivated to do the right thing above all (and to never do the wrong thing). If one is unwaveringly committed to SV (as Socrates claims he always has been), then acting contrary to virtue can only be a matter of ignorance about what the virtuous action is. Being perfectly virtuous, then, consists in two things: commitment to SV and knowledge of what virtue is. Although only philosophers will have both of these, the lower two classes will have the former, just as we have seen that some of Socrates' interlocutors, such as Gorgias, Protagoras, and Euthyphro, do in the earlier dialogues. Unlike Gorgias, Protagoras, and Euthyphro, however, the citizens of the Kallipolis will not think that they know what they don't know, but will be aware of their ignorance of the nature of the good, the just, and so on.

This reading of the *Republic* requires some optimism about the capacities of the mass of citizens of the Kallipolis. There is controversy about the nature and extent of the education of the producer class.[40] While it is true that Plato is not so interested in the producers and takes their education and behavior to be less important for the welfare of the polis than that of the other two classes (see 434a–b), I believe that all of the citizens, including the members of the lowest class, are deeply affected by being brought up and living in the ideal city. In general, I think that most scholars have been too pessimistic about the natures and abilities of non-philosophers in the Kallipolis.[41]

[40] For quite pessimistic assessments see Hourani (1949) and Reeve (1988), 186–91.

[41] Bobonich (2002) is an example of a scholar who argues that there is an enormous difference between philosophers and non-philosophers in the *Republic*, such that non-philosophers can in no way be virtuous or have anything like proper motivations since they are cut off from knowledge of Forms. Vlastos (1971c/1981b) argues that the members of the Kallipolis would all, or almost all, be just. Cooper (1977/1999), 139–41 attacks Vlastos' view; Vlastos (1971c/1981b) responds, 425–6. See also Vlastos (1991), 88–90. Irwin (1995), 229–35 also argues that knowledge is necessary for virtue and that, since only philosophers have knowledge, only they can be virtuous. Irwin denies, however, 384 n.16, that the auxiliaries have "slavish" virtue (see *Phd*. 68c–69c, *Rep*. 4, 430b) simply because they do not have knowledge. Kamtekar (1998) argues that the auxiliaries do have a type of "imperfect" virtue. More recently, Brown (2004) and Kamtekar (2004) further argue in different ways that the motivations and ends of non-philosophers approximate those of philosophers in the Kallipolis. While I will register some disagreements with aspects of their positions below, in general I found their papers very helpful and influential in my thinking about the topics that follow in this chapter and the next.

7.4.1 The effects of living in the Kallipolis

Even though the education in *mousikê* described in Books 2–3 is initially explicitly aimed at the guards of the city[42] (376e), many of the strictures on cultural products that Socrates describes apply to the whole city. When Socrates talks about excising lines of poetry in Books 2–3 or banishing Homer entirely in Book 10, he is talking about banishing him from the whole Kallipolis, not just from the area where the guards live. For example, the story of Cronus eating his children should not be told "in our city" (378b1–2; cf. 378d5, 386a1–4). A person who can imitate anything, a practitioner of a "mixed style," will not be permitted to perform his poetry and will be escorted out of the city (398a1–6). When it comes to music, multi-stringed and polyharmonic instruments (and the craftsmen who make them) will be banned from the city and only the lyre and cithara will be left, as well as a sort of pipe for shepherds in the country (399d–e). Craftsmen too are to build only graceful buildings and statues (401b). These regulations affect what *all* of the citizens will be exposed to during their lives, not just the upper two classes. The Kallipolis will be constructed according to plans and contain only such poetry, music, and art as have been approved by the rulers and that adhere to their guidelines. As we saw earlier in this chapter, exposure to such properly formed cultural artifacts will foster graceful, temperate, well-brought up characters. Thus even if the producers are given little or no *formal* education besides education in their craft (456d), they will be surrounded by a culture which conforms to the strictures of the philosopher-rulers. It would be wrong to think that someone who is a cobbler could go to part of the Kallipolis and see an uncut version of Achilles' lament, hear about Cronus eating his children, or listen to some cacophonous punk rock; such cultural artifacts are banished from the city altogether.[43]

7.4.2 The attitudes of non-philosophers towards philosophers

In Book 4 Socrates says that temperance will be found in the Kallipolis in the agreement between rulers and ruled as to who should rule (431d–432a). At this point in the argument, all that the reader knows is that the rulers will be selected from among the class of guards (412b–414b). The

[42] From which both the true guards (the rulers) and the auxiliaries will stem; see 412a–414b.

[43] Kamtekar (2004), 159, n. 49 claims that there would be no reason to censor the stories that the producers hear, "for how could they harm them?" I think that they harm them the same way bad stories harm the future guards: by affecting their souls.

only qualifications described thus far for being a ruler are that the person be "wise and capable" (412c13) and pass a battery of tests to make sure that his or her beliefs, instilled via the education outlined in Books 2–3, never waver, particularly due to fear or pleasure (413c–414a). In order to foster harmony between ruled and rulers, so that everyone cooperates and does the work for which they have a natural aptitude, Socrates invents the Noble Lie, which is to be told to *all* of the citizens (414b–415c).[44] It says that they are all born of the earth with different types of metal in their souls – gold, silver, or bronze/iron – that indicate what work they should do in the Kallipolis. In the terms of the Noble Lie, the rulers will have gold in their souls.

In Book 4, before philosophers are introduced, it is assumed that the Noble Lie would be sufficient for generating the agreement in all the classes about who should rule and who should be ruled. But once Socrates conveys the shocking news that, for the Kallipolis ever to come to be, philosophers must be rulers or rulers must be philosophers (473c ff.), the idea that ordinary people would accept this becomes implausible. Many commentators notice that once it is claimed that the rulers must be philosophers, we learn that the earlier "musical" education is insufficient to produce them. For example, at 503e Socrates refers back to the tests in "labors, fears, and pleasures" that he mentioned in Book 3 (413c–414a), which was initially how potential rulers would be selected from the larger set of guards, and says that those tests by themselves are inadequate. Potential rulers, now potential philosophers, must also engage in "the greatest subjects" (τὰ μέγιστα μαθήματα, 503e3). The greatest subjects are, of course, the Forms, and "musical" education alone is inadequate for providing knowledge of them (522a); mathematics and dialectic will be necessary. It seems to me plausible that not only does philosophers' ruling require more of the potential rulers, but also that it requires more of the rest of the citizens as well. The Noble Lie is adequate for establishing the belief in the lower classes that some people have an appropriate nature to rule and that it is necessary for all citizens to do what they are naturally suited for. But the further idea that the rulers should be philosophers and that the ability to rule is going to be identical to the ability to philosophize requires more argument. Glaucon remarks that "very many" people who are "not base" would take up arms and attack Socrates, unless he can defend himself with some argument (473e5–474a4); the simple idea that there would be rulers selected from the larger class of guards in Book 3, by contrast, provoked no such reaction. Socrates replies:

[44] As Brown (2004), 298 n. 44 points out. Kamtekar (2004), 161 recognizes this as well.

If we intend to escape in some way those whom you mention, then it seems to me necessary to define for them who the philosophers are that we're talking about and that we dare to say must rule. [We must do this] so that, having made this clear, we should be able to defend ourselves by showing that, on the one hand, it belongs by nature to them [i.e. to the philosophers] both to lay hold of [ἅπτεσθαι] philosophy and to rule the city, and, on the other hand, [it belongs by nature] to the others [i.e. to the non-philosophers] not to lay hold [of philosophy] and to follow the ruler. (474b4–c3)

This passage is important because it explains *how* we should understand the upcoming argument in Book 5 (476e–480a) as well as the continuing description through Book 6 of the true philosopher. Socrates intends to define who a philosopher is and then to show that, given who a philosopher truly is, she alone is fit to do philosophy and to rule the city. Unlike the Noble Lie, this argument is not explicitly presented as something told to the citizens in the Kallipolis; rather, it is aimed at persuading non-philosophers in the audiences of both the inner and outer frames, who are shocked by the idea that philosophers must be the rulers. I shall argue, however, that the argument in Book 5 ought also to be understood as a newly necessary part of achieving the agreement in belief as to who shall rule and who shall be ruled, which was said to constitute the Kallipolis' temperance in the earlier passage from Book 4 (431d–432a).

Before turning to the argument itself, however, it is important to emphasize the broad range of the audience to whom it is addressed. In the literature the argument is often referred to as the argument against "the sight-lovers" or the "lovers of sights and sounds." When Socrates says that one who takes to learning easily and voraciously counts as a lover of wisdom and philosopher, Glaucon objects that many people will fall into this category (475d). Not only will it include the lover of spectacles and those who run to every Dionysian festival to hear new choruses but also those who pursue "minor arts" (τεχνυδρίων, 475e1). When Socrates describes the group, he includes the "lovers of crafts [φιλοτέχνους] and people of action [πρακτικούς]" (476a11).[45] This description would clearly fit the majority of those in the lowest class of the Kallipolis: the craftsmen, merchants, and producers.[46] It would also include those guards, described earlier as quick-learning philosophical types (375e), who do not go on to become philosophers, but remain auxiliaries instead. What this means is that Socrates presents this argument

[45] Reeve (1988), 61–2 says that the argument refers to "sightseers and craft-lovers."

[46] As I shall emphasize below (7.4.4), we need to remember that the lowest class in the Kallipolis includes *everyone* who is neither a philosopher nor an auxiliary. This is not an unintelligent or incapable lot: doctors, engineers, architects, and artists will all fall into this category.

as one aimed at persuading not just a narrowly defined particular group, the "sight-lovers," that philosophers ought to rule, but the majority of people who engage in crafts and are people of action.[47] This group would include most of the audience of the inner frame (for example, Polemarchus and Cleitophon), as well as most of the readers/hearers of the *Republic* (including ourselves). After all, almost everyone is shocked at the idea that philosophers must rule.

Book 6 confirms the idea that the cognitive condition of the sight-lovers and craft-lovers is the same as that of the majority of the population. At 493e2–494a1 Socrates describes the cognitive condition of "the many" in terms that are identical to the way he describes the sight-lovers' (476c, 479a): as those who do not accept the existence of Forms.[48] It is this majority that blames philosophers and castigates them. Over the next ten Stephanus pages Socrates tries to explain why most people believe that philosophers are vicious or at best useless, which is how he says philosophers are generally perceived in the ordinary world. Overall Socrates thinks that the majority's opinion of philosophers is not surprising, given their untutored grasp of what a philosopher is and the typically sorry condition of actual philosophers. He places most of the blame for corrupted philosophers on the inadequate cities they live in, which destroy those who have a philosophical nature (495a–b). The few who are able to be true philosophers while living in inadequate political situations do so by steering clear of politics (496a–e).[49] When Adeimantus complains that Thrasymachus and "most of your listeners" will not be convinced (498c5–8), Socrates replies that this is because (1) most people (unlike those in the Kallipolis) have never seen true philosophers and witnessed their virtue;[50] and (2) they have never heard arguments that were "fine and free" and seeking truth rather than eristic debates aiming at strife and reputation (498d–499a). Both of

[47] I do not deny that the description of "the lovers of sights and sounds" may in fact be supposed to refer to a specific segment of Athenian society; all I am doing is emphasizing that this is merely *one* of the groups that is being addressed. The argument is in fact addressed to everyone in their cognitive condition (i.e., almost all non-philosophers). This point risks getting lost when one refers to the argument as the "argument against the sight-lovers." I thank Wolfgang Mann for help in clarifying this. I shall refer to the argument itself as the "Book 5 argument."

[48] See below, 7.4.3, for a more detailed description. Socrates says that this is why the majority cannot be philosophical, but this is not the entire explanation. Acknowledgement of the existence of Forms is a necessary condition for being a philosopher, but it is clearly far from sufficient. Below I shall maintain that the argument in Book 5 generates acknowledgement of the existence of the Forms, but that is very different from having, or even being capable of having, knowledge of them.

[49] Socrates refers to himself as saved by his divine sign restraining him from entering politics, and he offers the same explanation here as he did in the *Apology* (31c–32a); see discussion in 2.2.

[50] See Kamtekar (2004), 161 for discussion of the effect of philosophers as models for non-philosophers in the Kallipolis.

these replies refer to the potentially different attitude of "the majority" once they *have* seen genuine philosophers acting in a Kallipolis and once they *have* heard arguments of the proper sort. This implies that the majority is capable of hearing and being persuaded by arguments of a special sort. It is plausible to think of the Book 5 argument along with the subsequent description of true philosophers and what they would do in the Kallipolis in Book 6 as examples of the sort of "fine and free" arguments Socrates has in mind.[51] At 499d–500a, in response to Adeimantus' continued doubt about the prospects of persuading most people about philosophers' rule, Socrates expresses genuine optimism about the possibility of transforming the many's belief:

> Do not condemn the many so completely in this way. In truth they will have a different opinion if, by not indulging in your love of contention [μὴ φιλονικῶν], but by encouraging [them] and by destroying their slander of philosophy, you show them whom you mean by philosophers, and you define, *just as we did even now*, both their nature and practice [τήν τε φύσιν αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν ἐπιτήδευσιν] so that they don't think that you mean the people they suppose. And if they see it this way, you will then say that they will adopt a different opinion and will answer differently. Or do you suppose that a person who is gentle and not grudging would be harsh with someone not harsh or begrudge someone not grudging? I will anticipate you and say that I believe that only in some few people, not in the majority, is there such a harsh nature. (499d10–500a7)

The majority of people can learn and change their beliefs about the *nature* of the philosopher if they are addressed by gentle types who are not striving for contention.[52] It is only a very few that are not amenable to persuasion.[53] The change that Socrates believes can be effected in the majority is the same as the change that is to be effected in the sight-lovers, craft-lovers, and "practical people" via the Book 5 argument. The reference to the discussion of the nature and practice of philosophers refers back to the beginning of the defense of the claim that philosophers must rule in Book 5 as well as looking forward to the description of their education and abilities in the rest of Books 6–7. What this means is that it *includes* the argument of Book 5. Commenting on this passage, Rachana Kamtekar says: "Since

[51] See 8.4 for what philosophers will do in the Kallipolis.

[52] Katja Vogt suggested to me a possible further implication of the passage. If those who would address such arguments to the many in the Kallipolis are the philosophers, then, perhaps unlike Adeimantus in the present discussion, they will be truly virtuous and so truly gentle, unbegrudging and free from contention.

[53] And it is unclear whether such few would remain in the Kallipolis – particularly if they attempted to act against the laws of the city. Socrates says that those with unhealthy bodies will be left to die and those with incurably bad souls will be put to death (410a2–4).

Socrates assumes no special education for the majority whose acceptance of philosophers' rule is at issue, it seems safe to say that the producers in the ideal city could have at least as good reasons for believing that philosophers ought to rule as do the majority in this passage."[54] This is an important point. Any reasons available to the uneducated majority in the ordinary world ought to be equally available to producers in the Kallipolis, who moreover would have the considerable advantage of growing up in the ideal city.[55] While Kamtekar recognizes that showing the majority what a philosophical nature and pursuits are "refers back to [Socrates'] account of philosophers as knowers of Forms and lovers of wisdom (479e–484b),"[56] she does not push the implication of this for our understanding of non-philosophers in the Kallipolis.

Socrates' appeal to the majority includes moving them from their untutored belief at 493e2–494a1 that there are no such things as Forms, which matches the initial condition of those who are supposed to be persuaded by the argument of Book 5, to the realization of what a philosopher is by nature: namely one who grasps that there are Forms *and* knows what they are and, as we shall see below (8.4), who orders herself, the citizens, and the entire Kallipolis in accord with them. This is confirmed shortly after this passage when Socrates asks whether the majority, having learned the nature and activities of true philosophers, would in any way doubt that philosophers are lovers "both of what is and of truth" (τοῦ ὄντος τε καὶ ἀληθείας). Adeimantus says that it would be absurd (501d1–3). To understand this, the majority must realize that philosophers have knowledge of the Forms but that they themselves do not (which is, of course, the lesson of the argument in Book 5). Applying Kamtekar's point, if the majority of ordinary people, including the audiences of the inner and outer frames, such as Polemarchus who is clearly a member of the producing class, can appreciate who real philosophers are and that they are uniquely qualified to rule

[54] Kamtekar (2004), 160. In a footnote to this sentence, n. 50, she continues: "I am not supposing that everything said of the majority applies to the producers – that, for example, the producers in the ideal city will have persuasive speeches like this addressed to them. For the purposes of reconstructing the reasons for agreeing to philosophers' rule available to the producers, the reasons available to an uneducated majority set a minimum standard." The "persuasive speech" Kamtekar is referring to seems to be 499c–500a, quoted by her on p. 159. But I do not see why a persuasive speech similar to the argument at the end of Book 5 might not be addressed to them. If Socrates thinks that it could be persuasive to the majority in the ordinary world, why should it not be persuasive to non-philosophers in the Kallipolis? The Noble Lie is going to be addressed to all the citizens. And it seems to me reasonable that a member of the producer class might ask why the rulers of his city are philosophers. He may "understand," via the Noble Lie, that some people are naturally suited to rule, but still wonder why they must be philosophers.

[55] See 7.4.1.

[56] Kamtekar (2004), 160.

because they, and they alone, have knowledge of what is and of truth, there is no reason to deny this to the non-philosophers of the Kallipolis as well.

7.4.3 Instilling Socratic wisdom in non-philosophers

I proceed, then, on the assumption that an argument that can appeal to the vast majority of people in the ordinary world can certainly appeal to the non-philosophers of the Kallipolis. In what follows, I shall use "sight-lovers" as shorthand for "the vast majority of people in the ordinary world" who share the cognitive condition of the sight-lovers.[57] Thus, the Book 5 argument (or something similar to it)[58] could be expected to be told to the citizens of the Kallipolis as part of persuading them that philosophers ought to rule and thus contributing to the temperance of the city expressed in the shared belief about who should rule and be ruled.[59]

Let me now turn briefly to the argument in Book 5 (476e–480a).[60] Fortunately I do not need to enter the debate that has received most of the attention in the literature about how to construe the verb "to be" in the claims that "knowledge is set over what is," "belief is set over what is and is not," and "ignorance is set over what is not" (477a).[61] My interest lies in less controversial aspects of the argument itself. According to a widely held and well-defended reading of the cognitive state of sight-lovers, the mistake they make is to believe that a quality such as beauty consists in many varied sensible properties and to deny that there is any single Form of

[57] Again, I do not deny that the "lovers of sights and sounds" is most probably a description of a particular, more narrowly defined, group.

[58] It may well be that Glaucon's answering on behalf of those who deny the existence of Forms enables the argument to be presented in, for example, a more condensed form. If Socrates had conducted the argument with Polemarchus, it might have required a more lengthy discussion.

[59] Another part of the case, well discussed by Kamtekar (2004), esp. 160–1, and emphasized in Book 6, will be that non-philosophers in the Kallipolis will see true philosophers living and ruling in a healthy city. Thus the latter will be exemplary models of virtuous, effective leaders, quite unlike the way philosophers (and those with a philosophical nature) turn out in the ordinary world.

[60] Fine (1990), 87 is clear that the argument is aimed at convincing the sight-lovers that philosophers ought to rule; she refers to the "dialectical requirement" of the argument, which is that it must at least begin with premises acceptable to the sight-lover. This point was originally made by Gosling (1968). She then argues, more controversially, that only a veridical reading of the verb "to be" will satisfy the dialectical requirement. See Gonzalez (1996) for criticism of Fine's analysis. Bobonich (2002), 58–66 says that in the Book 5 argument Plato is "facing up" to the task of showing that the Kallipolis must be ruled by philosophers, but he never addresses the fact that the argument in Book 5 is aimed explicitly at *persuading non-philosophers* that philosophers should rule by explaining to non-philosophers who philosophers really are and how they are by nature suited to rule. Bobonich mines the argument as a source for information about the difference between philosophers and non-philosophers, but neglects to see what I argue is important below, that the "sight-lover" is not a static figure, but one whose cognitive condition must be quite different *after* the argument than it is *before*.

[61] See Bobonich (2002), 59–62 for a summary of different positions and references.

Beauty.[62] The goal of the argument is to persuade them that there is a Form of Beauty and that knowing it is a necessary condition for knowing what beauty is. Further, it will show that without knowledge of the Forms the most a person can have is belief and not knowledge,[63] and that belief, unlike knowledge, is fallible.[64] Since the philosophers alone have knowledge, they alone will be guaranteed to get things right. That is the special ability that knowledge of Forms gives them and the reason that they should rule the Kallipolis.

Gail Fine claims to offer a reconstruction of the argument that is valid. While her interpretation of the initial premises as requiring a veridical interpretation of the verb "to be" is controversial, her reconstruction of the later parts of the argument (479e–480a) is not. On her account, once Socrates has established that the sight-lovers have belief, not knowledge, about the many Fs (479e1–5), he proceeds to argue that Forms must exist by assuming (questionably) that knowledge is possible and that for knowledge to be possible there must be non-sensible objects of knowledge, i.e. Forms.[65] I am interested in the effect that such an argument is supposed to have on the understanding of the majority of non-philosophers, on the assumption that it is successful.

Typically scholars frequently and correctly emphasize the great gap that the argument implies between philosophers and non-philosophers.[66] Just how great the gap is is further elaborated in Books 6–7 in the images of the Sun, Line, and Cave, and in the description of the arduous education that a person must undergo to become a philosopher. Sight-lovers are described as "asleep" or "in a dream," whereas the philosopher is "awake" in her grasp of reality (476c–d). In their confused grasp of the explanations

[62] See Irwin (1995), 264–5 for a succinct defense of this reading and further references.

[63] At least about the sorts of things for which there are Forms. The argument in Book 5 seems to me to leave open the possibility that one can know, for example, that this is a rose without knowing Forms, but one cannot know that the rose is beautiful without knowing the Form of Beauty. As is well known, the scope of the Forms, particularly in the *Republic*, is difficult to pin down precisely. For my purposes this is not important since it is clear that there are Forms of Justice, Goodness, Beauty, and other moral properties, and it is knowledge of these that is necessary for creating and ruling a truly just and good city.

[64] This is agreed, I think, by all interpreters of the argument, regardless of how they interpret the verb "to be" in the phrase "knowledge is set over what is." On the traditional interpretation knowledge and belief are set over two distinct classes of objects, Forms and sensibles. On some versions of this reading Plato denies that one can have knowledge of sensibles or beliefs about Forms. For good reasons why this is an unattractive view to attribute to Plato and for a way of interpreting it so that this conclusion does not follow see Fine (1990). According to Fine, 86, a reason for denying that Plato rejects knowledge of sensibles, which is particularly relevant to my reading of the *Republic,* is that we would lose the argument for why philosophers are especially suited to rule. If knowledge is restricted to Forms and one can at best have belief about sensibles, why would the philosopher be in a superior cognitive condition as compared with ordinary people when it comes to ruling the city?

[65] Fine (1990), 93–4.

[66] Bobonich (2002) is a recent example.

of beautiful things, sight-lovers are typically taken to correspond to the prisoners in the image of the Cave. Socrates says that he and Glaucon must address the sight-lovers gently, hiding from them if possible that they "aren't well" (476d7–e2). It is worth emphasizing that the mistake of these non-philosophers concerns what is most real and what the true explanation of the sights and sounds they experience is. The "sight-lover" thinks that he has knowledge and understanding of things that he does not.

This said, commentators miss the significance of the difference in the cognitive state of the sight-lovers *after* they have heard (and, let us assume, have been persuaded by) the argument of Book 5. In the lead-up to the argument proper (476c), Socrates delimits two characters: first, the hypothesized true philosopher, who knows the Form of Beauty itself by itself and does not confuse it with things that participate in it; and second, a person who has no idea that there is a Form of Beauty *and* who could not follow someone who leads him to knowledge of it. Despite presenting two figures at the start, the argument both here and through to the end of Book 7 actually involves three types of people:

(1) People who believe that the beautiful is simply the "many beautifuls" and who deny that there is any single Form of Beauty. These are the sight-lovers *prior* to the Book 5 argument; they also correspond to the prisoners in the Cave and to the majority of people in the ordinary world (493e2–494a1).

(2) People who believe *that* there is a single Form of Beauty, which is one and which is the explanation of the beauty of all the sensible particulars that participate in it, but who are aware that they do not know what it is. These people include the audience of the inner and outer frames of the *Republic*, as well as the sight-lovers, *after* going through the Book 5 argument. The sight-lover, like audiences of the *Republic*, is strictly speaking *no longer a sight-lover* after the argument since he no longer denies the existence of the Beautiful itself by itself.

(3) A person who actually has knowledge of the Forms of Beauty, Justice, and so on (the true philosopher in Plato's sense).

The second category is extremely important but, as far as I know, unappreciated. If the sight-lover remains a sight-lover *after* the argument – that is, remains in category 1 – then the argument has not been effective and the sight-lover has not been persuaded that the philosopher should rule. Without realizing *that* there are Forms, which the philosopher knows, but he does not, the former sight-lover has no reason to accede to philosophers' rule and the Book 5 argument would fail to serve its intended purpose. When Socrates says that a sight-lover is one who is incapable of achieving knowledge of the Form of Beauty we realize, by the time we have read

through Book 7 anyway, that this description includes almost everyone; for very few people have the nature or the ability to pass successfully through the educational program that yields true philosophers by yielding knowledge of the Forms. Clearly this includes the audience of the inner frame, perhaps even Socrates himself who, as is often noticed, denies that he has knowledge of the Form of the Good (505a) but claims to have beliefs about it (506c). While Glaucon seems to have heard of the Forms (thus perhaps he is especially able to follow Socrates here), there is no reason to think that Thrasymachus, Polemarchus, Cleitophon, or Lysias ever has. Similarly the audience of the outer frame, we readers (or ancient hearers) of the dialogues, may be persuaded by the *Republic* or other dialogues *that* there are Forms and *that* they play certain roles (for example as "causes" in some sense of certain sensible properties), without the dialogues ever providing us with *knowledge of* any Form whatsoever. The latter is the sole possession of philosophers in Plato's sense.

Being in the second category described above has much in common with Socratic wisdom from the *Apology*. The point of the Book 5 argument is to convince the audience of both the inner and outer frames that there is something we are ignorant of: the Forms. We are supposed, like Socrates and Glaucon, to realize *that* there are Forms without, of course, having knowledge of them. If we recall the earlier point that the sight-lovers are part of a diverse group that would include the producers, then we should see that the point of the Book 5 argument (or an argument like it) is to move members of the Kallipolis *from* the original state of sight-lovers, which is the state the Socrates calls most blameworthy in the *Apology* (29b): thinking that one knows what one does not. The sight-lover moves from thinking that he knows what beauty is to a state of "Socratic wisdom" where he realizes that there is a Form of Beauty but that he lacks knowledge of it.[67] Thus, although it is true that all non-philosophers will spend their lives in the Cave, they are not in the condition that the prisoners are in.

[67] This interpretation conflicts with Bobonich (2002). He claims, 65, that: "We have seen no reason to think that the education of non-philosophers in the *Republic* gives them a belief in the existence of Forms and their non-identity with sensibles." But this is precisely what the argument of Book 5 aims to do and, as I have argued above, the sight-lovers include craftspeople and are identified with the "majority" whom Socrates addresses in Book 6. If it is an argument that is capable of convincing them, it ought to be able to convince the non-philosophers of the Kallipolis as well, including the members of the producing class. Further, if non-philosophers do not have a belief in the existence of Forms and in the fact that the philosophers know them, why do they consent to having the philosophers rule? In Bobonich's discussion of the Book 5 argument (58–66) there is no mention of the fact that the entire point of the argument is to explain to non-philosophers why philosophers should rule. In addition, Bobonich's characterizations of the sight-lover all describe his condition *before* he has heard the argument (64). As I explain above, *after* the argument the sight-lover will no longer be a sight-lover strictly speaking.

The prisoners parallel the sight-lovers *before* they have heard the Book 5 argument.[68] Although that argument does not, of course, lead them out of the Cave, it does give them the true belief *that* there is an outside of the Cave and *that* the things they took to be real are in fact images.[69]

So while it is true, as all agree, that almost no one will be able to come to have knowledge of the Forms (only true philosophers), in fact most people will be able to come to realize that they are ignorant of the Forms, knowledge of which is crucial for the proper formation and rule of the Kallipolis, and that, without knowledge of the Forms, they have, at best, true belief, at least about the range of things for which there are Forms. In this way the *Republic* develops and expands on a central aspect of Socrates' philosophy: that of making people aware of their own ignorance. All non-philosophers in the Kallipolis will have Socratic wisdom. Thus there will be no sight-lovers in the Kallipolis because no one will believe that the nature of beauty consists in the many beautifuls. Non-philosophers will have the true belief that there is a single Form of Beauty of which, however, they are ignorant. Whereas in the *Apology* Socrates wonders whether perhaps it is only the god that is wise (23a–b), in the *Republic* only the true philosophers are.

7.4.4 Is the view I attribute to Plato about the producer class too optimistic?

I imagine that, despite what I have argued,[70] some readers remain skeptical that the members of the producer class could follow an argument like

[68] Socrates says the prisoners are "like us" (515a5) – that is, presumably, like the majority of ordinary people in the world who have not had the benefit of hearing the *Republic*. The sight-lovers *after* the argument of Book 5, and we readers/hearers of the *Republic*, cannot be in the same position as the prisoners, for we have been given the presumably true belief that there are Forms and that the sensibles that we take to be most real are in fact only images of the true realities. The prisoners, by contrast, are not even aware of their ignorance.

[69] As an internalist about justification, Plato demands that a potential knower must have the "account" for herself, without which a person can have at best true belief (see *Meno* 97a ff.). (This has led some to argue that Plato's conception of knowledge is more like our conception of understanding: see, e.g., Benson (2000), 216–21, with references. Of course this depends in part on what we want to count as "our" concepts of knowledge and understanding; see Fine (2004), esp. 71–4, for a defense of the claim that Plato *is* talking about knowledge.) Thus, non-philosophers will have at best true belief according to Plato. We should note that, on an externalist account of justification, the members of the Kallipolis would be right to say that they *know* that there are Forms and, as we shall see, that by doing what the philosophers tell them they are doing what is truly just and good. Thus the situation of the non-philosopher citizens in the Kallipolis relative to the orders of the philosopher-kings is similar to Socrates' situation relative to the (albeit limited) commands of his divine sign; see 2.2.

[70] In particular in 7.4.2 where I emphasize that Plato is even optimistic about the potential of "the many" in the ordinary world; and the majority in the Kallipolis will be significantly better off.

the one at the end of Book 5. I shall simply add here that we should remember that *everyone* who is not a philosopher-king or an auxiliary will be a member of the "third class." As a trip through the National Archaeological Museum in Athens or to any number of archaeological sites should suffice to show, this includes people who have accomplished many extremely sophisticated and complex technical and artistic achievements.[71] The "lowest" class of the *Republic* is composed very largely of people who are engineers, doctors, architects, writers, musicians, navigators, and so on – what we call educated professionals. It is inaccurate to think that most of the producers are unskilled manual laborers, who would be somehow incapable of following an argument or being appealed to by reason.[72] Any group of people who construct the Parthenon or build ships to sail the Mediterranean or solve the many complex, technical, problems that Classical Greek society evidently did solve are highly intelligent people, even though virtually none of them could become a philosopher in Plato's sense. We should not be distracted by the fact that Plato is primarily concerned with philosophers and their special knowledge of the Forms. For Plato, of course, knowledge of the Forms is a vastly superior cognitive achievement than any artistic or engineering feat could ever be, if for no other reason than that they all concern the sensible as opposed to the intelligible world.[73] We should keep in mind too that, insofar as contemporary thinkers would deny the existence of the Forms, to that extent the specialized, expert, knowledge which belongs to philosophers alone may become closer in kind to the sorts of knowledge had by ordinary people.[74]

Finally, near the end of Book 2 Socrates draws the distinction between a "true falsehood" and a "falsehood in words" (382a–d). He says that *all* gods and people hate a true falsehood:

[71] Consider, for example, the complexity of the process of producing a bronze statue.

[72] Although it is contentious, it may be that the Kallipolis allows for slavery, which would mean that there may also be a significant number of non-citizens as a source of unskilled labor.

[73] It is also not difficult to see the ideological investment of most professional readers of the *Republic* (who are philosophers or, at least, academics) to sustain the idea that they are somehow elite and superior to those who deal with "practical" rather than "theoretical" issues. The idea that theoretical issues are somehow loftier or more sophisticated than practical (or political) questions is part of the intellectual legacy we have inherited from Plato.

[74] In addition, as I have mentioned, in the inner frame of the dialogue Socrates is speaking to people at least several of whom would clearly belong in the third class, such as Polemarchus, Thrasymachus, Cleitophon, Lysias, and Euthydemus. Even if these are not the primary interlocutors, Plato has them present because presumably they can follow the argument and potentially benefit from it. Similarly the audience of the outer frame will, overwhelmingly, not be philosophers in Plato's sense either, but they too are presumably supposed to be able to follow and benefit from the *Republic*.

I mean everyone [πάντες] would accept this least and would hate most to be in such a state: to be false and to be mistaken and ignorant in one's soul about the things that are [περὶ τὰ ὄντα], and both to have and to hold there a falsehood. (382b1–4)

This seems to be a perfectly general claim about all human beings, which takes on additional meaning when read in light of later books. All human beings have a rational part of the soul and they all hate to have a falsehood about "the things that are."[75] The majority is in just such a condition when they deny that there is any such thing as a Form of Beauty prior to the argument in Book 5. After the argument, even though they do not have knowledge of the Beautiful, the Just, and so on, at least they no longer falsely believe that the Beautiful and Just are many and not one, or that they know what the Beautiful or the Just is; they no longer have a falsehood in their soul about the things that are. They have moved from ignorance and falsehood to having the true beliefs that the Beautiful is one itself by itself, an object of knowledge, and known by philosophers. According to this passage, non-philosophers will be happier for the change, since the ridding of false belief in one's soul about the things that are is something that *all* human beings earnestly desire.

[75] See Reeve (1988), 209 for the idea that a true falsehood is a falsehood in the governing, rational, part of the soul. See too the criticism of his view by Kamtekar (2004), esp. 143–5.

CHAPTER 8

Aiming at virtue and determining what it is

8.1 JUST ACTIONS AND THE JUST SOUL IN *REPUBLIC* 4

Near the end of Book 4, the argument turns back to just actions, a just soul, and the relationship between the two. The infamous tripartite account of the soul has been completed, with its rational, spirited, and appetitive parts, corresponding to the three classes of people in the ideal city. Socrates has also located courage, wisdom, and moderation in the tripartite soul. In terms familiar from chapter four, he has described what it is to *be* courageous, wise, and so on, rather than providing an account of what courageous or wise *actions* are. This is largely what leads commentators to say that he has abandoned behavioral definitions of the virtues. And indeed Plato does not attempt to put what all and only virtuous actions have in common into purely non-evaluative terms. But that does not mean that the question of determining which actions are the virtuous ones – that is, the question that such a behavioral definition intended to answer – can be simply skipped over and replaced by the question of what it is to be virtuous. For when we turn to the account of a just soul we find that nothing obviates the necessity of correctly identifying virtuous actions and performing them, if one hopes to become just and put one's soul in the proper order.

In the early part of this argument (441e–442d), a just person, in parallel with a just city, is described as the person in whom each of the parts of his soul does only what it is supposed to and does not interfere with the other parts. We learn that this especially concerns ruling: the rational part of the soul is what ought to rule the entire soul, with spirit as its ally (441e, 442c). The rational part deliberates and issues commands, and spirit carries them out. Together they make sure that appetite does not get out of hand, revolt, and in violation of justice take over rule of the soul for itself (442a4–b3). This harmony of soul is the way in which a person makes himself a concordant unity (443e1–2).

Once the description of the harmonious state of soul that constitutes justice is complete, Socrates abruptly lists the actions such a person would refrain from, calling attention to the fact that there is no knowledgeable way to determine these actions as unjust. A person with a just soul would be least likely to embezzle, commit sacrilege, steal, betray, be unfaithful, commit adultery, or neglect parents or the gods (442d–443b). He calls all of these ordinary or everyday matters (τὰ φορτικά) (442e1; cf. *Ap.* 32a8), meaning, presumably, ordinary examples of unjust actions. It is this point in the argument that has provoked much controversy and the accusation that Plato illegitimately slides from a "Platonic" account of justice, whereby justice is a harmonious state of soul which constitutes and/or contributes to a person's being "happy" and "healthy," to the claim that a person with such a harmonious soul will perform what are conventionally considered just actions of the type listed.[1] The objection then queries: why should we think that having a harmonious soul implies acting justly in the ordinary sense? I shall turn to this below (8.2). For now, let us note merely that, in helping himself to a rough list of the types of actions the just person would refrain from, Socrates takes the determining questions to be, roughly, answered. If the argument from chapter seven is correct, this should be particularly problematic since it is by the imitation and proper depiction of such actions that a person acquires a just state of character in the first place.

Socrates concludes that the explanation of this just behavior stems from each part of the person's soul doing its own work with respect to ruling and being ruled and thus that their dream from Book 2 of finding "some type of justice" (τύπον τινὰ τῆς δικαιοσύνης, 443c1) by founding an ideal state has been realized. The reason they have been successful is because justice in the state – each person's performing his natural function and not doing the work of another – is "an image in a way of justice" (εἴδωλόν τι τῆς δικαιοσύνης). What exactly is the image of justice? The passage elaborates: it is right for the cobbler by nature to cobble and to do nothing else, and the builder to build, and so on. This is presumably an image of the principle that each should do his own work. So the "reality" is that justice is each doing his own, and the image is the cobbler cobbling, the builder building, and so on. In a complex seventeen-line sentence, which begins as follows, Socrates sums up what they have learned about justice:

[1] Sparked largely by Sachs (1963).

In truth, as it seems, justice was some such thing [τοιοῦτο<ν> μέν τι ἦν], but not concerning an external action of the things of oneself, but an internal [one], what is truly about oneself and the things of oneself.[2] (443c9–d1)

It would be wrong to read this as attempting to offer a new definition of justice without qualification.[3] Socrates has already concluded that justice is each of the parts of the soul doing what it ought with respect to ruling and being ruled a few lines earlier (443b1–2). What he adds here is that what they have found is justice *in the individual* and that *this* consists in a harmony of the tripartite soul. The phrase "some such thing" picks up on the phrase "an image in a way of justice" immediately preceding (443c4–5).[4] So, the sort of justice they have found in the state in fact mirrors what it is to be a just individual, except that what it is to be a just individual concerns "internal" rather than "external" actions. This is not intended to be a definition of justice *tout court*, which covers both just actions and just people, but instead a definition of what it is to be a just *person*.

After explaining that the just soul is one that has been made a concordant unity Socrates then says that only once one has properly ordered one's soul should one turn to actions concerning the possession of wealth, treatment of the body, political matters or private contracts (443e2–3). If we stop here, it can indeed sound as though Socrates is making the concept of the just agent prior to that of a just action. Since a person with a well-ordered, just soul performs just actions, before one engages in actions of some significance he ought to put his soul in proper order. But matters cannot be this simple. There is a second part of the picture that has been in play since the beginning of the description of the proper education: what produces the proper ordering of the soul's parts that constitutes justice in

[2] Slings' (2003) text changes τοιοῦτο to τοιοῦτον without explanation. Burnet (1900–7): iv and Adam (1902) have the neuter. On the authority of Hense, Slings also adds an additional τι, which is not in the manuscripts, after the first ἀλλά, so the translation would go, "but not *something* concerning . . ."

[3] As Slings' (2003) additional τι might suggest; see previous note. See too Annas (1981), 158–9: "The whole development of the argument is summed up vividly at 443c–d, where Plato says that the sphere of justice is not external actions but a person's own inward self. He has made the just *agent* primary, not the question of just *actions* which dominated the concerns of Thrasymachus, and of Glaucon and Adeimantus." On the reading I defend, Plato's claim is much more circumscribed. He is not here making the just agent primary, only pointing out that the "sort of" justice Socrates has defined is one concerning what it is to *be* a just individual. As we have seen, and shall see, the habituation principle makes the determination of what the just action is still central.

[4] The reference to an image of justice, with hindsight, foreshadows the Form/image distinction to come in the following books, and recalls the idea of forms appearing "everywhere" in things, which we saw in 7.3 in the passage from Book 3 (402c).

the first place is a proper upbringing consisting in engaging in the right activities. And this is not only an idea we must recall from Books 2–3, but one that is brought out in this very passage, and, as we shall see, also emphasized in the remaining sections of Book 4. The lengthy sentence ends as follows:

> . . . in all these cases [i.e. actions concerning the possession of wealth, treatment of the body, political matters or private contracts] the agent[5] believes and names the just and fine action, on the one hand [ἡγούμενον καὶ ὀνομάζοντα δικαίαν μὲν καὶ καλὴν πρᾶξιν], to be the one which would preserve and help to produce this state [ἣ ἂν ταύτην τὴν ἕξιν σῴζῃ τε καὶ συναπεργάζηται], and on the other hand wisdom to be the knowledge that presides over this action [σοφίαν δὲ τὴν ἐπιστατοῦσαν ταύτῃ τῇ πράξει ἐπιστήμην], and an unjust action to be that which always dissolves this [state], while ignorance is opinion which in turn presides over this [ἄδικον δὲ πρᾶξιν, ἣ ἂν ἀεὶ ταύτην λύῃ, ἀμαθίαν δὲ τὴν ταύτῃ αὖ ἐπιστατοῦσαν δόξαν]. (443e4–444a2)

Scholars have found Socrates' claim that virtuous activities have the property of preserving and "helping to produce" (συναπεργάζηται) a virtuous state of soul puzzling. Terence Irwin writes, "But his [Plato's] claim that promotion of psychic health is necessary to make an action just (443e4–6) seems to misuse the analogy with health."[6] Irwin interprets the passage as claiming that the promotion of psychic health *makes* an action just.[7] But I think that it says something importantly weaker: just actions will have the property of preserving and helping to produce psychic health in the agent who performs them, but that property is not what *makes* the action just, rather it is the fact that the action is truly just (the ultimate explanation of

[5] Shorey (1930), 413, n. d says that the unexpressed subject of the sentence is "anybody or Everyman." Although the subject is indefinite, it is restricted to one who wishes to be just and act justly. Reeve (1988), 260 takes the subject to be the "philosopher-king," which cannot be actually true given that the philosopher-king has yet to be introduced. Nevertheless, Reeve is correct that the person who has the wisdom that consists of the knowledge to preside over this action is the philosopher-king. See also Cooper (1977/1999), 141, who sees that the only person who will be truly just is the one who possesses knowledge of what it is best to do and be, and that this will be the philosopher-king with his knowledge of the Form of the Good.

[6] Irwin (1977), 210. See also the more limited remarks in Irwin (1995), ch. 15, n. 16, 386; Reeve (1988), 260–1 and 318–19. Annas (1981), 163 calls the habituation principle "in a way, a truism," but denies that doing ordinarily just actions will engender a Platonically just agent: "for the question of what acts are ordinarily just, what duties one ought to do, is settled by society's moral consensus quite apart from considerations of what makes an agent Platonically just." This is correct about what is "ordinarily just," but the text points to a determination about what is truly just. If we perform actions that are truly just, and they are truly just because, as we shall learn, they participate in the Form of Justice, then we will have a soul which is truly harmonious. Plato foreshadows this account here; see above.

[7] This is widely accepted and naturally so if you think that what has been given in Book 4 is a definition of justice *simpliciter*. For example, see also Scott (2000), 2: "actions derive their claim to be just and unjust depending on which state of soul they promote (443c9–444a2)."

which will be that it participates in the Form of Justice) that causes it to have the property of preserving and helping to produce psychic health. To borrow a distinction from Aristotle, the relationship between an action's being just and its maintaining and helping to produce a harmony in the soul is that of necessary coincident.[8] While what makes an action truly just is its relationship to the Form of Justice, it has the necessary property of engendering and maintaining a just (i.e. harmonious) soul in the agent who performs it, which is not part of the essence of what *makes* the action just in the first place.[9]

Consider too this passage from Julia Annas:

> The good man is the norm for just action; he can tell you what the right thing to do is, because he is just. It is clear from what Plato says here [443e5] that the just man identifies the just action by reference to the state of psychic harmony which is Platonic justice, not by reference to lists of duties accepted from any external source.[10]

The good man is the norm for just action insofar as he is, we might say, a "just action detector." Because of the state of his soul, which includes a good deal more than we have discussed so far, particularly regarding its wisdom, he is able to determine what the just and fine thing to do is. So *we* (less than just people) can look to the just man as a guide for determining which actions are just, provided that we remember that he acts as he does *because* the action in question *is* truly just, but the action is not just simply because he does it. Annas' second sentence risks obscuring this important point. The just man does not identify "the just action by reference to the state of psychic harmony which is Platonic justice," because it is not its engendering that psychic state that makes it just, but the fact that it is truly just that makes it engender the harmonious psychic state. Thus the truly just man or woman, the philosopher, will indeed look to an "external source," but that source will be the Form of the Good. Similarly the non-philosophers will look to an external source as well: the philosophers.

Therefore on the interpretation I am arguing for an action could not be truly just and yet fail to engender psychic harmony in an agent, although it is not the engendering of that harmony that *makes* the action just, but its relationship to objective justice (that is, the Form of Justice). If this understanding of the relationship between just actions and psychic harmony is

[8] See *Met*. Δ, 1025a30–4. A property p is a necessary coincident of object X, if p belongs to X necessarily in virtue of what X is, but is not part of the essence of X.

[9] See Kraut (1992b), 317: "just acts, persons, and cities are not what justice is, and it is correct to call them just only if this means that they participate in the Form of Justice."

[10] Annas (1981), 160.

correct, what reason does Plato offer for thinking it true? Why believe that performing a truly just action would lead to psychic harmony of the sort that Plato describes? In order to answer these questions we need to look more closely at the harmony that constitutes a person's being just. I shall turn to this below (8.2) and return to this important passage as well (8.3), but first I want to complete the examination of the relationship between just actions and a just soul in the rest of Book 4.

After explaining that injustice is a corresponding disorder and chaos in the soul (444b), Socrates asks Glaucon whether to act unjustly and to be unjust and to do just actions are all very clear since justice and injustice are (444c2–4). Strikingly, Glaucon responds, "How so?" How does justice and injustice in the individual, explained in terms of psychic harmony and disharmony, resolve questions about acting justly and unjustly? Socrates' answer is to present an instantiation of the habituation principle, drawing an analogy between virtue and health: as healthy actions produce health and diseased actions disease, so doing just actions produces justice and doing unjust actions produces injustice (οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ μὲν δίκαια πράττειν δικαιοσύνην ἐμποιεῖ, τὸ δ᾽ ἄδικα ἀδικίαν;) (444c11–d1). This answer explains the *importance* of doing just actions, but it says nothing about how to determine which actions are the just ones.

A little further on a similar point is made for virtue generally when it turns out to be a sort of "good condition" (εὐεξία)[11], health, and beauty of the soul; vice the contrary (444d12–e1). Socrates adds more details to what is a familiar account. The soul and body are independent loci of harm and benefit. "Excellence" is the name for the state that is best for the soul, as "health" is the name of the excellent state of the body. The value of the soul is incomparable to that of the body (445a–b; cf. 591b3–7). But, unlike in the *Gorgias*, we now have a more extensive and detailed account of what this good state of soul consists in: a harmony of three parts, with reason ruling and so on. Before Socrates turns to pose the critical question of whether justice or injustice is more beneficial, he yet again repeats a version of the habituation principle: "Is it not also the case that fine practices [τὰ μὲν καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα] lead to the possession of virtue, but shameful ones [τὰ δ᾽ αἰσχρά] [to the possession] of vice? – Necessarily" (444e3–5). The reference to "practices" recalls the account of education in Books 2–3, the aim of which was to describe which pursuits and practices ought to be engaged in. Above we saw Socrates remark that a person needs to put one's soul in order *before* he or she engages in proper actions (443e2–3). Now

[11] The same word was used in discussion with Gorgias, *Gor.* 464a; see 3.4.

Socrates emphasizes the second half of the circle: the generation of a virtuous state by repeated performance of virtuous actions. Right here then, in the midst of the account of justice in *Republic* 4, which is notorious for being an account of justice in the soul and not of just actions, the significance of which actions are indeed the just ones is repeatedly highlighted. For it is only by engaging in the right sorts of activities that this much coveted and well-described psychic health will be achieved and maintained. The determining question thus looms large, as I have argued it has all through the account of education.

Finally, consider Socrates' restatement of the puzzle they face at the end of Book 4:

> And now at last, as it seems, it remains for us to consider whether it is profitable to do just things and to engage in fine practices and to be just [δίκαιά τε πράττειν καὶ καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύειν καὶ εἶναι δίκαιον], whether or not it escapes notice that a person is such, or whether [it is more profitable] to do injustice and to be unjust if one does not have to pay the penalty nor must become better by being punished. (444e7–445a4)

Note here the continued emphasis on *both* acting *and* being just. This highlights the glaring absence of any account of how to determine what the virtuous actions are, or why they are virtuous. We know, given the habituation principle, that virtuous actions generate and maintain virtuous souls. We know too, in more detail than in any previous dialogue, what a virtuous soul is like, and why it is a good thing to have one. But we are still at a loss as to how to get this project off the ground without a way of determining which actions and activities are the fine and virtuous ones.

Glaucon's and Adeimantus' challenge apparently left no conceptual room for justice to be a good in itself, that is, on the account defended in chapter six, a good for the soul. The only good in itself that the many acknowledge is desire satisfaction – something that the unrestrained unjust person has, and the restrained just person does not. Thus acting unjustly appears to be a good in itself, while acting justly seems to be an evil in itself. But Socrates' account has opened up conceptual space for a kind of good in itself that is not even in view on the many's account: namely the health and harmony of the parts of the soul, generated and maintained through just action. Acting justly and being just, then, are goods *for* the soul, since they result in and/or constitute the excellent condition of the soul.[12] Employing reasoning familiar from the *Crito* (47d–48a),[13] Glaucon dismisses further

[12] See chapter six for discussion of "causal consequences" of just action.
[13] This reasoning includes the principle of the superiority of soul over body.

inquiry as unnecessary: if life is not worth living with a ruined body, it is absurd to think that the unjust life is more profitable if "the very nature and constitution of that whereby we live is disordered and corrupted." How can life be worth living "if only someone can do whatever he wishes [ὅ ἂν βουληθῇ] [and wishes to do] anything except that which will remove him from the place where vice and injustice [arise] and make him possessed of justice and virtue" (445a9–b4)? When Glaucon speaks of the trade-off between the good of having psychic health and the good of the desire satisfaction of a man doing "whatever he wishes" he takes it to be no contest.[14] But Socrates objects that there is still more work to do, and he is right. If they are to appeal to the many, and convince them of the value of justice, the argument for its superiority is not complete. First, there must be a description of how precisely the unjust person fails to possess the good of psychic health, for only then will we know that and how the just person is *better* off. Then we must understand why acting justly does not nevertheless remain a bad thing in itself insofar as it frustrates our desires, and why the unjust man does not still possess a good in itself insofar as he may do "as he pleases" and thus has desire satisfaction. Books 8–9 will address these issues, beginning with detailed accounts of how the various degenerate characters fail to possess the good in itself that is psychic harmony.[15]

8.2 JUST PERSONS

What makes a person just is each part of his soul "doing its own," particularly regarding "ruling and being ruled" (443b1–2, 444d7–10). The central aspects of this are: reason rules, spirit supports that rule, and appetite obeys. We are told more about reason's fittingness to rule: reason is "in reality wise and has forethought on behalf of the whole soul" (441e3–4). A person is wise by virtue of "that small part in him which rules in him and makes these commands [which spirit preserves] since it has, in turn, the knowledge in it of what is beneficial for each [part of the soul] and for the whole, which is the community of the three parts" (442c4–7). So when reasoning is functioning at its best, it does not simply rule, but rules with knowledge. What is the connection between its possession of knowledge and its acting on behalf of the whole soul? I presume the idea is that, whatever the capacities of the other two parts of the soul are,[16] they do not and cannot, by definition,

[14] See 6.5 for the importance of doing "whatever one wants" in Glaucon's and Adeimantus' challenge.
[15] Crucially they will argue that there is more to desire and desire satisfaction than appetite. See below, 8.5.
[16] A very controversial question; see, e.g., Bobonich (2002), ch. 3, 216–57.

determine what is just or right or best *simpliciter*. The assessment of truth about actions or people being just or unjust, right or wrong, and so on is the job of reason. Spirit may determine whether something honors or dishonors us and appetite may inform us of whether something is pleasurable or painful in certain ways. But neither is capable of making determinations about right or wrong, as only reason is interested in the truth about what is excellent, instead of merely what pricks our honor or gratifies our appetites. Reason makes particular sorts of judgements – about what is good, just, and so on – and, further, when it is ruling at its best it makes these judgements correctly with knowledge.

Appreciating what is involved in reason ruling has led commentators to claim that *only* philosophers can be just, since, although the reader does not yet realize it at this point in Book 4, only philosophers have knowledge and so only they are wise. Thus, given that what it is to be just is defined as the rational part ruling "with knowledge" and "with wisdom," Plato's view must be that only philosophers can be just.[17] I shall turn to this issue below, but first I want to consider the question I left unanswered in the previous section. I claimed that it is not an action's effect on a person's soul that *makes* it just, even though a truly just act could not fail to engender psychic harmony. But why believe that performing a truly just action promotes or engenders psychic harmony?

Let us start with the case of the truly wise and just, who, we know with hindsight, are the philosophers. When the Forms are introduced, we learn that they are the paradigmatic objects of knowledge and comprehension. By definition, objects of knowledge[18] are comprehended by reason. It is only the rational part of the soul that can grasp what justice is, that is, the Form of Justice.[19] If we act truly justly, then we act in a way that truly participates in the Form of Justice. This must be, at least, a necessary

[17] See Cooper (1977/1999), 139–41; Irwin (1995), 229–35. Bobonich (2002), 41–88 holds a very strict version of this and draws quite negative conclusions about the ethics and politics of the *Republic* from it.

[18] I am using "knowledge" here in the sense of knowledge of Forms, and not ordinary awareness of one's environment or of the fact that such and such would be pleasant or painful or dishonorable, which spirit or appetite might "know" in the sense of be aware of. It is only reason that can possibly ascend to grasp the Forms. Below I shall argue further that it is only the reason of the non-philosophers that could understand the argument in Book 5, discussed in 7.4.3, about why philosophers should rule.

[19] I take it that this is uncontroversial no matter how sophisticated one thinks that the capacities of appetite and spirit for forming beliefs and judgements may be. See, for example, Kamtekar (1998), 328 for a generous assessment. Bobonich (2002), 219 writes: "Plato characterizes each of these three parts in agent-like terms: each is treated as the ultimate subject of psychological affections, activities, and capacities that are normally attributed to the person as a whole." See also Gill (1996), 240–75 and Irwin (1995), 217–22. For a more "deflationist" interpretation see Cooper (1984/1999), 120–1:

condition for having a harmonious soul, assuming we are convinced that a harmonious soul has the nature that Plato says it does. Since reason ruling with knowledge is what it is to have a harmonious soul, if someone acts in a way that is *not* truly just (does not participate in the Form of Justice), then either he is ignorant of what the just act is (and thus his reason is not ruling with knowledge) or else some other part of his soul has taken over rule and he is acting according to the ends of appetite or spirit; in either case he is not just and so is in a less than healthy condition in the most important part of himself. In order to have and maintain psychic health, one must do what is truly just and virtuous.

The account of justice as a harmony in the soul, as I have said, answers the question of *why* one would commit to SV; it is part of the response to Glaucon's and Adeimantus' challenge to show how acting justly is good for the soul. To act in a way that truly participates in the Form of Justice (and ultimately in the Form of the Good) simply is to follow the rule of reason, for it is reason and reason alone that can discover the truth about what is fine and just. Therefore to do truly just acts is to act in a way that maintains and produces the psychic order that constitutes Platonic justice.

Does this account, however, miss the critical significance of motivation? Surely, one might object, it is not enough to be just simply to do what the just person would do. For obviously someone might act justly simply in order to avoid a painful punishment or in order to be honored. In such cases the agent is presumably led to do what the just person would do either by appetite or spirit.

A philosopher's motivation for acting justly stems from: (1) the motivations and desires that arise and develop through the course of his early education and from living in the Kallipolis, which ensure that appetitive and spirited desires are calm and correct, and that virtuous actions are seen as desirable and praiseworthy;[20] and (2) from the understanding that psychic health consists in the rule of reason over the other two parts of the soul. Commitment to psychic health is commitment to SV. Anyone who understands what psychic health is has been shown how acting virtuously is a good for the soul; he has thus been given a reason to want to act justly overall. Since reason alone can determine what truly virtuous action is, only by following reason can one be psychically healthy. A philosopher,

". . . Plato's theory that there are three parts [of the soul] is, roughly, the theory that there are three psychological determinants of choice and voluntary action"; and Gerson (2003).

[20] At the moment we are talking about the motivation of ideal agents, i.e., the philosophers. See above, 7.4.1, for the effect of living in the Kallipolis on the two lower classes. Below, 8.3, we will discuss the nature of virtue in non-philosophers.

then, is someone who has shown superior ability to never waver from the beliefs about what ought and ought not to be done that have been dyed into her as a result of early education. In addition, she understands that the soul is the most important part of her and that psychic health and harmony consists in reason ruling, spirit supporting, and appetite obeying. Thus she understands *why* she ought to be virtuous, in addition to her having the habituated desire to be virtuous. Finally, given her advanced training in mathematics and dialectic she will know which actions, practices, and institutions *are* truly just and good because of her knowledge of the Forms.

For many recent commentators, the metaphysics in Books 5–7 provides in some way an account of *why* the philosophers are motivated to be just.[21] I do not deny that knowledge of the Forms may supply philosophers with additional motivations.[22] On my view, elaborated in 8.4, the metaphysics is about how to answer the outstanding determining questions and who will be able to answer them. Thus it is truly a "digression," as Socrates says (543c4–6), from the main topic, since it is not about *why* a person is better off doing just actions and being just. The answer to that is supplied by the argument in Books 4 and 8–9, when we learn about the good that psychic harmony is for the soul and the harm to the soul that results from various forms of psychic disharmony.

Moreover, a philosopher will *act* justly, for reason will have the knowledge of what justice is. But might not a philosopher know what justice is, and still fail to act on it? To act unjustly would mean that either the philosopher is ignorant, which he is not by definition, or that he is ruled by some other part of his soul than reason, which would mean that he would voluntarily forgo the good of psychic health. Since a healthy soul is far more important than a healthy body or than reputation or material gain, there would be nothing of comparable value for the philosopher for which he would exchange the good of a healthy soul.[23] The philosopher-king, then, like the *phronimos* in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*,[24] quite simply has no reason

[21] See Cooper (1977/1999), Irwin (1995), 298–317, and Kraut (1992b).

[22] See Brown (2004), 287–8. I agree with much of what Brown says. I differ from him in that I think that, in addition to the early education of the philosophers, the argument in Book 4 is key to philosophers' (and, as we shall see, non-philosophers') understanding of why they should be just. Furthermore, what makes the philosophers particularly special is not so much their *motivation* as their *ability*: their ability to *know* what is just, good, beautiful, and so on. It is this ability to answer definitively the outstanding determining questions, which we non-philosophers can have at best true beliefs about, that qualifies them to rule and makes the existence of the Kallipolis so much as possible. See below.

[23] This will be different for the non-philosopher, as we shall see below.

[24] See 1146a5–7, 1152a6–8, and Burnyeat (1980), esp. 88.

to be incontinent. No action that runs contrary to virtue would motivate the philosopher to act, since he values above all his psychic health, which is constitutive of his happiness and is generated and maintained by virtuous actions.

What generates a "gap" between psychic justice and "ordinary" or "common" justice is the assumption, shared by those who attempt to defend Plato, that Plato is now defining justice *simpliciter* as a state of psychic harmony. If we understand the definition of justice as "harmony in the soul" as *replacing* an account of just actions, then such a puzzle is pressing. On the interpretation I defend, by contrast, the question of how to *determine* which actions are just and virtuous remains, at this stage of the argument, outstanding. Psychic harmony is what it is to *be* just; what it is that makes things just is the Form of Justice. Determining which actions are just will be a matter for those who know what Justice itself (the Form of Justice) is. On the common view that makes psychic harmony constitute justice *simpliciter* it becomes a mystery how *anyone* could determine whether an action is just or not. A person would need to see whether it contributes to psychic harmony. But how would one do this? There would be no content to the idea that reason rules, for there would be no object for its knowledge. It would be badly circular if what reason knows is simply that by doing such and such an action it would continue to rule. There has to be an explanation of *why* reason is superior to appetite and spirit, and that is because it alone can have knowledge of the true nature of the Just, the Beautiful, the Good, and so on. Thus, as we would expect, the reason why the rational part ought to rule in the soul is the same as why philosophers ought to rule in the Kallipolis: because it (they) alone has (have) knowledge of the Good.

Finally, Socrates' claims to knowledge in the *Republic* are consistent with those in the "earlier" dialogues. In the account of the virtues in Book 4 Socrates does not disavow knowledge as he did in the dialogues of definition.[25] The interpretation defended here explains why Socrates can be confident (at this level of detail, cf. 435d) in his account of justice in the soul, without contradicting his standard disavowal of knowledge of what justice is, in the sense of knowing how to determine which actions or action-types are just and fine. The accounts of the virtues in Book 4 are not accounts that even attempt to answer the question that the dialogues of definition posed. These dialogues were trying, unsuccessfully, to determine what virtuous actions were in general: to answer the question of the *Euthyphro*. When

[25] Irwin (1995), 262 takes this as a difference in need of explanation.

this question is addressed in the middle books, Socrates disavows knowledge of the Form of the Good, which will be necessary and sufficient for answering these determining questions. What is striking about the view that emerges is that, even with the determining question outstanding, Socrates is able to describe what justice in the soul is in a way that supports the goal of defending the aiming principle, SV, that one should do the just/virtuous action above all. To the extent that earlier dialogues turned to questions of *being* virtuous we have seen that they supply answers similar to the ones given in the *Republic* – courage is knowledge of what is to be feared and what not. At the same time Socrates disavows, consistently, knowledge of what virtue is. Lacking that general knowledge, he has no way to determine which actions are virtuous, barring the intervention of his divine sign[26] or his following "the *logos* that seems best," which is explicitly described as a second best that falls short of knowledge. He has, by contrast, consistently avowed knowledge of SV.[27] The argument in Book 4 is about this question. In the account of education, where the proper determination of which stories were the appropriate ones was at issue, Socrates cautioned Glaucon not to think that they knew their account was right (392c; 402b–c; 416b–c). In the middle books of the *Republic* as well, where I shall maintain that determining questions are central, Socrates will once again disavow knowledge and offer epistemological caveats. On my reading, Socrates' epistemological claims about aiming and determining questions remain consistent.

8.3 THE VIRTUE OF NON-PHILOSOPHERS

We have just discussed the motivations and psychic state of the ideal agent. The *Republic*, however, is explicitly concerned with explaining to *non-philosophers* why they ought to be just above all, that is, even if they will lose out in terms of physical health or comfort, material goods, reputation, and appetitive gratification. The argument of Book 4 is intended to answer the aiming question about why one should aim at justice and virtue above all. It is an argument understandable by non-philosophers as well as by philosophers; no knowledge of Forms is required. Thus non-philosophers can understand *why* they should act justly and virtuously. What they lack, which the philosophers have, is knowledge of how to answer *determining* questions about which actions are just and virtuous, either in general or in the here and now. Thus, I shall argue, non-philosophers in the *Republic*

[26] See also *Rep.* 496c, where Socrates mentions it as the cause of saving him from the wrong way of life, and enabling him to pursue philosophy in non-ideal circumstances.

[27] See chapter one.

ought to be in a position similar to Socrates': they have been given a good reason to be committed to SV and, by the time Book 7 is completed, will be aware that they do not have knowledge about how to answer determining questions, but that philosophers do (see 7.4.3). All citizens of the Kallipolis have had the effect on their souls of growing up in a well-ordered, harmonious, beautiful, and just city, have witnessed first-hand true philosophers as rulers, and have learned the "ethical truths" embodied in the Noble Lie.[28] Furthermore, the auxiliaries (at least) have been given a "musical" education aimed at training their spirit and appetite to desire what is truly good and to listen to reason.

It is important to remember that the accounts of justice and wisdom in Book 4 are given *prior* to the news that it is philosophers alone who are wise and have knowledge. The overall aim of the *Republic* is to show how it benefits a person to be truly just above all and not simply appear just. The answer to why one ought to be just is supposed to appeal to the reader of the *Republic* and to the audience of the inner frame. If the only person who could understand why one ought to be just above all, regardless of the loss of benefit to one's body or one's material possessions (including one's reputation, which is quite important considering the status of the auxiliaries), is one who *knows* what justice and goodness is, then the argument of the *Republic* ends up as a failure. If only the philosopher knows why it is valuable to be just, then only he values justice "for its own sake."[29] Thus only a philosopher will understand, for reasons that remain entirely offstage, why he ought to act justly. But, as I have argued, the challenge of Book 2 is to see what justice does itself by itself to one's soul. The Book 4 answer that justice is a harmony in the soul, with each part of the soul doing its proper work, is (a major part of) the answer to the aiming question: why be just/virtuous above all? The answer is because just actions preserve the most healthy state of the most important part of oneself: one's soul. If non-philosophers had no prospect of *being* just, that is, of living with a harmonious and healthy soul (even if they do not have the prospect of their soul's being in the best state possible for a human being – namely wise), which is engendered and protected by engaging in truly just actions and activities, then the *Republic* would provide the non-philosopher with no

[28] See 7.4.1 and 7.4.2 and Kamtekar (2004).

[29] Cf. Irwin (1995), 235: "only philosophers choose justice for what it really is." My reading of the *Republic* would qualify such a claim in the following way. Non-philosophers do choose *being* just for what it really is: a healthy, harmonious, state of soul. Of course non-philosophers do not know what justice really is in the sense of knowing what makes just actions just: that is, they do not know the Form of Justice.

reason to be just.[30] Thus I shall defend the iconoclastic idea that (almost) everyone in the Kallipolis is led in a sense by the rational part of the soul.[31]

In Book 8 (580d–581c) Socrates says that people come in three types, depending on which part of their soul rules: appetitive, spirited, or rational. If it is assumed that this is true not simply of ordinary people but also of those who have been raised in the special culture of the Kallipolis, then one must assume that the producers in the Kallipolis seek (and perhaps understand) that they will get the most of what they want (money) in the Kallipolis, the auxiliaries realize that they will get the most honor, and the philosophers understand that they will get the most access to truth.[32] Rachana Kamtekar writes: "[581b–c] could be simply an observation about what people are like, whatever the natural and environmental causes, rather than a claim that there are three fixed natures. But if it is the latter, then it would seem that auxiliaries must be ruled by their spirited part, and the producers by their appetitive part."[33] She then argues that non-philosophers' virtue would require an education "to value as ends things other than their characteristic ends of honour or wealth." Although I am quite sympathetic with the overall direction of her argument, if an education can lead a person to value as ends something other than honor or wealth – for example, virtue – in what sense would such a person *still* be ruled by their appetitive or spirited part? Presumably, the point would be that the mere valuing of ends other than the person's "characteristic" ones is insufficient for that person to count as being led by reason.

I think that more finely grained distinctions are needed. Given the description of the nature of the rational part as that which seeks "in reality" the truth and which cares for the whole soul, it seems plain that if, for

[30] In addition, Plato says that the goal of the *Republic* is to make the city as a whole as happy as possible, not just one class (421b3–7; 519e1–520a2). If the lower classes have no prospect of being virtuous or at least of approximating virtue in some way, then they are entirely deprived of happiness.

[31] The "almost" means that there can be exceptions, especially in the producer class. But I do think that the majority of the producers in the Kallipolis will be led by their reason.

[32] Reeve (1988) maintains such a view. Bobonich (2002), 47 explicitly claims that this passage states "general psychological principles that apply to people *both inside and outside* the just city" (my emphasis). Kamtekar (1998), 315 also adopts this idea without questioning it. She then works hard to show how the resources of an auxiliary, who is led by his spirited part, can nevertheless achieve a secondary or "imperfect" virtue that appreciates genuine virtue for approximately correct reasons, even if he lacks the best reasons of the philosophers. Kamtekar (2004), esp. 145–9, raises important objections against both Reeve's (1988) and Bobonich's (2002) view that non-philosophers desire to achieve wealth or honor but do not value virtue as an end. One main criticism is that if the Kallipolis simply helps producers or auxiliaries to maximize their wealth or honor then the Kallipolis in reality fails to improve them morally and it is unclear how it has made them any happier, since it is false that honor or wealth is the good.

[33] Kamtekar (2004), 154.

example, an auxiliary comes *to value as an end* something other than honor, he could only come to value that through an exercise of his reason. For it is only reason, by definition, that can value virtue qua virtue. Now it is true that the mere fact that, for example, an auxiliary comes to value justice via his reason does not show that he leads, as it were, his life around reason in the sense that he spends his life pursuing the truth and seeking knowledge. Rather, we might agree, on the assumption that 580d–581c does state general psychological principles, that his life goals are set, in the main, by his spirited part, even though his rational part operates on its own for the good of his whole soul in his understanding that the philosophers should rule and why they have a nature to rule. Thus the auxiliary realizes that he has true beliefs about what ought to be done because they have been provided for him by philosophers who know. This realization, I maintain, can only be the result of the auxiliary's reason aiming at discovering, as best it can, what the truth is. In these capacities the reason of the auxiliary is not acting as a servant of spirit, but realizing something about what is good for the soul as a whole.

This is further illustrated in the discussion of the auxiliaries' courage (429c–430c). Socrates says that the auxiliaries' courage consists in their steadfast adherence to their educated "correct and lawful belief" about what should be feared and what not (430b3–5). That the auxiliaries will not abandon their beliefs because of pleasure, pain, fear, or desire implies that they are led by their reason, which tells them that the laws and orders of the rulers are in fact correct. For, if they were led by spirit in such situations, it is easy to imagine that they might abandon the orders of the rulers in certain situations; for example, if the rulers order them to withdraw and to cease fighting when (it might seem to the auxiliary) additional glory is to be had. The situation is similar for the producers. We have seen in 7.4.3 that a sort of Socratic wisdom will be the cognitive state of non-philosophers in the Kallipolis about critical beliefs regarding the city, the role of the philosophers, and the citizens. Of course the lowest class has not received an auxiliary's education and does not have the auxiliaries' ability to preserve their beliefs about what ought to be done in the face of temptation.

Despite these considerations, however, does the *textual* evidence from Book 4 justify attributing justice to non-philosophers or does it rather, as most scholars believe, explicitly rule out attributing it to anyone but philosophers? As we have seen, a person is wise in virtue of the rational part having knowledge within it of what is advantageous for each part and for the soul as a whole (442c4–8). While no one disputes that philosophers alone will be wise, we should be clear that the audiences of the inner and

outer frames do not know this yet. These audiences agree, presumably, *that* what it is to be truly wise is to have knowledge in the rational part of one's soul; as we have seen, they must wait until the argument at the end of Book 5 to learn that they themselves lack that knowledge and that philosophers alone possess it. Most commentators conclude, nevertheless, that each of the virtues (in particular, justice) requires wisdom so that the account of virtue here amounts to saying that only philosophers can be just.[34] But these views focus exclusively on the idea that reason is only functioning well (at its best) when it is wise, that is, when it *itself* possesses knowledge. The passage we discussed in 8.1, however, is the one in Book 4 that actually connects justice and wisdom. And if we examine it closely, we shall see that it clearly leaves open the possibility that one could be just without *oneself* possessing wisdom. I shall quote the passage again:

In truth, as it seems, justice was some such thing [τοιοῦτο<ν> μέν τι ἦν], but not concerning an external action of the things of oneself, but an internal [one], what is truly about oneself and the things of oneself . . . [one needs to prevent meddling among the parts of soul and to order harmoniously the three parts of his soul first and only then turn to actions concerning the possession of wealth, treatment of the body, political matters or private contracts] in all these cases the agent believing and naming the just and fine action, on the one hand [ἡγούμενον καὶ ὀνομάζοντα δικαίαν μὲν καὶ καλὴν πρᾶξιν], to be the one which would preserve and help to produce this state [ἣ ἂν ταύτην τὴν ἕξιν σῴζῃ τε καὶ συναπεργάζηται], and on the other hand wisdom to be the knowledge that presides over this action [σοφίαν δὲ τὴν ἐπιστατοῦσαν ταύτῃ τῇ πράξει ἐπιστήμην], and an unjust action to be that which always dissolves this [state], while ignorance is opinion which in turn presides over this [ἄδικον δὲ πρᾶξιν, ἣ ἂν ἀεὶ ταύτην λύῃ, ἀμαθίαν δὲ τὴν ταύτῃ αὖ ἐπιστατοῦσαν δόξαν].[35] (443c9 . . .–444a2)

As we saw above, Socrates is explaining that the justice they have found is an internal justice, on analogy with the justice in the city, which consists in the proper relationship between parts of the soul. The agent whose soul is in proper order then turns to actions not only believing and naming as just

[34] Cooper (1977/1999), 140; Irwin (1995), 223–36; Bobonich (2002), 43.

[35] Bobonich (2002), 43 cites this passage as justification for the following claim: "Justice requires that each part of the soul do its own job with regard to ruling and being ruled and this requires possession of the other three virtues, including wisdom." The passage does say that each part of the soul must do its own job, but it does not say simply that justice requires the other virtues including wisdom; rather, as I shall show, it says that an agent *calls* wisdom the knowledge that presides over the just action, which in turn preserves the just state of soul. Importantly, talk about what the agent will *call* wise (or, with hindsight, *whom* the agent will call wise) does not say anything about whether the agent *himself* will possess the wisdom which presides over the just action; it makes the weaker claim that it will call wisdom the knowledge that presides, leaving open who it is that possesses that knowledge. Reeve (1988), Irwin (1977), (1995), and Cooper (1977/1999a) do not discuss at all the passage's claim that "the agent will call wisdom the knowledge that presides over the action."

and noble the action that preserves this state, *but also* believing and naming *wisdom* as the knowledge that presides over "this action." What precisely is the end of the passage saying about wisdom? Wisdom is contrasted with ignorance. An unjust action is one which upsets and dissolves the harmonious psychic state, while ignorance is when mere opinion (δόξα), as opposed to knowledge, "presides over this [action]." Scholars note that this is the first mention in the *Republic* of the knowledge/opinion distinction that will figure so largely in the epistemology of Books 5–7.[36] I think that the mention of wisdom and ignorance supports the understanding of the relationship between the effects of just actions on psychic harmony and the objective nature of just actions defended above. A just and fine action is one that preserves and engenders psychic harmony, but the ideal agent also believes and names wisdom the knowledge that presides over *this same action* – the action that is truly noble and just and thus critical to psychic harmony. With hindsight, the knowledge that presides over "this action" is the knowledge of the Form of Justice which enables a person to determine whether "this action" is just or not. We shall see in the next section that the philosophers will use their knowledge of the Forms in order to settle determining questions in the sensible world. I think that the critical role of this is foreshadowed here. Thus, while it is true that just actions engender just souls and help to preserve them, we must have knowledge "presiding over" our actions to ensure that they *are* truly just and so will truly have the proper effect. Without this, one might have the absurd result that a just man (one who is ruled by reason) does unjust actions (actions that are in reality unjust). The account here then is similar to the earlier account of education where we saw that engaging in the proper actions and activities brings about the proper type of person (7.3). Just as Socrates had to pull the overanxious Glaucon back from concluding that they *had* in fact described the proper education, which, Socrates said, must await knowledge of forms, here too there is a reference to the necessity of wisdom and knowledge for a person truly to be just. And the knowledge that is required is knowledge of how to determine which actions are the truly fine and just ones.

But what is most significant about the passage for the understanding of the justice of non-philosophers is that it does *not* require that the agent *himself* possess the necessary knowledge. It requires something critically different: that the agent *believe and name* wisdom to be the knowledge presiding over actions, and that he name and believe ignorance to be mere belief presiding over actions. This *will* be something a non-philosopher

[36] See Adam (1902), 264; Shorey (1930), 416.

will do, as we have seen, once he has gone through the Book 5 argument (7.4.3). He will understand that mere opinion is fallible, while knowledge is infallible. Further, realizing that philosophers alone have knowledge, he will call the philosophers wise, believe them to be so, and believe that he ought to listen to what they say. Thus he will, as I said above, follow his reason in a derivative way. This passage does not say that possession of wisdom by an agent is necessary for that agent's having a harmonious soul and being just. Rather, read carefully, it says that there must be wisdom and knowledge present in determining which actions ought to be done in order for a person to have and maintain a just soul. This might be accomplished by someone who has the knowledge within himself (as it will turn out philosophers do) or it might be accomplished by someone who can, as the passage requires, at least recognize and call wisdom the knowledge of someone else (the philosopher) that presides over the actions that non-philosophers will do in the Kallipolis.

Thus inside the Kallipolis everyone will be led by reason in some way: the philosophers by their own reason and thus in the best way, the non-philosophers derivatively by the reason of the philosophers.[37] Reason leads derivatively in non-philosophers in two ways: in their Socratic wisdom effected by their understanding that philosophers alone have knowledge of the Good, Just, and so on (as we saw above, 7.4.3); and in their awareness that they have true beliefs about what they ought to do and how the Kallipolis ought to be, since they get their beliefs about these things from the philosopher-rulers who have knowledge.[38] It will be the *reason* of the

[37] A caveat: incontinence is certainly possible for the citizens who are not philosophers. They have been given the best education they are capable of receiving, have the advantages of living in the Kallipolis, realize that they lack knowledge, that virtuous action is supremely important, and that philosophers supply them with true beliefs about what they ought to do and how they ought to live. But of course they sometimes act contrary to their reason, unlike philosophers (8.2). A large part of the musical education, as we have seen, consists in testing whether auxiliaries and rulers preserve their beliefs in the face of pleasure and fear. Socrates envisions a member of the auxiliaries who "on account of vice" leaves his formation or drops his weapons in battle; such a person is then "demoted" to craftsman or farmer (468a6–8). Recall too that auxiliaries function as police as well as military, so bad behavior will be punished and incurably bad people will be put to death (410a2–4).

[38] Bobonich (2002), 72 rejects the idea that non-philosophers can have true beliefs about what philosophers have knowledge about because, he claims, it misleadingly suggests that they agree on content, but differ only in epistemic states. The content about which non-philosophers have "false beliefs" according to Bobonich is "what makes things good or fine" and thus they will fail to recognize "why virtue is good and fine." On my account, they will *not* have false beliefs about these things, they will have Socratic wisdom about them: they will realize *that* Forms make things good and fine and they will realize that they lack knowledge of Forms. Further they will agree with the content of philosophers' judgements about what ought to be done in the city: they will have true beliefs that the city ought to be ordered as it is, that philosophers ought to rule, that they ought to do whatever they have been commanded to do by the philosophers, and that in this way they will have harmonious souls led by reason and so will be psychically healthy (or as healthy as is possible for them); philosophers, by contrast, will *know* these things.

non-philosophers that sees that the philosophers ought to rule. So it is plausible to say that they are led by reason too "in a way" (cf. 590c7–d6). The lower classes agree that the philosophers should rule, and understand, in a sense, why they should rule insofar as they alone have knowledge of Forms. They also understand, as we readers understand, that, just as justice in the city consists in each class doing its own work, justice in the soul consists in each "class" of the soul doing its own work. Any other arrangement where, for example, spirit or appetite ruled rather than reason constitutes an unhealthy state of the most important part of oneself. Despite realizing that their own rational parts of the soul lack wisdom, the mass of citizens can still follow their reason by acting not for the sake of honor or appetite, but for the sake of virtue. They are committed to doing the right thing above all, although they realize (with their reason) that they do not have knowledge of what the beautiful/noble or just is. They further realize that since philosophers *do* know, by doing what the philosophers say – by composing poetry or building buildings or fighting in wars according to the philosophers' instructions – they are doing what they ought to and so they are acting in a way that produces and engenders a happy and orderly soul and society.

Habituated virtue, generated by a proper upbringing – that is, one consisting of truly virtuous actions and practices – together with an awareness of their own ignorance about the nature of goodness and virtue is as virtuous as most human beings can be. In this sense it captures the general Greek sense of *aretê* as "excellence." There is not one human state of excellence because, Plato believes, there are different kinds of human beings with different natural capacities for excellence. Habituated virtue is effective so long as the actions and activities engaged in *are truly virtuous*; it is a just action for the cobbler to cobble in the Kallipolis. Without philosophers making determinations about which practices and activities are the truly good and virtuous ones, the only way an ordinary person will be excellent is by some stroke of luck – e.g., the divine sign. This is why the Kallipolis will never come into being, nor will evils end for cities or human beings, until philosophers are rulers (473c6–d11). For only a philosopher is capable of knowing which actions are virtuous. Non-philosophers are capable of realizing that they ought to *be* virtuous and thus do virtuous actions (Gorgias, Protagoras, and Euthyphro agree with that). What they lack, however, is *wisdom*. Although they are incapable of gaining wisdom for themselves, they are not simply "slavish" in their virtue (cf. 430b), for they can acquire the "human," Socratic, wisdom of the *Apology*, and so achieve a "political virtue" that is the result of their properly habituated and educated

beliefs about the good (cf. 430c). A slavish virtue would consist in doing the right thing simply out of fear of punishment or hope of reward. The non-philosophers of the *Republic*, by contrast, understand that truly just actions are truly good for their souls and for their city, and they also realize that the philosophers know what is truly just.

Let me summarize where we are. By the end of Book 4 Socrates has begun to answer an aiming question: why is acting justly of supreme importance? The partial answer is that acting justly is valuable in itself insofar as it generates and maintains psychic health, of which we now have a fairly detailed description. There is more to goods for the soul than simply desire satisfaction. But at the same time we have seen that this answer, in order to be effective, needs a determination to be made: how can we determine which actions and practices are the virtuous ones? This question has dogged the argument ever since Socrates and company began to describe the education of the future guards, and is all the more pressing now that we realize how much particular actions and practices *affect* and *effect*: the very well-being of the most important part of ourselves. The account in Book 4, relying as it does on the habituation principle, makes this concern explicit. Cleitophon's complaint is exacerbated, not resolved. It will be the task of Books 5–7 to address this determining question. If I am correct about the structure of the argument, we can see how the *Republic* is a deeply unified work that expands on and develops the views we have seen in the earlier dialogues.

8.4 THE PROMISE OF AN ANSWER TO DETERMINING QUESTIONS

There is, of course, a profound difference between philosophers and non-philosophers, but it consists not so much in a difference in their *motivations*, as in their *abilities*. The philosopher alone has knowledge of which actions and practices are good, fine, and just and thus will truly produce good, fine, and just characters. Knowledge is described in the *Republic* as a *capacity* (*dunamis*) – it gives the philosopher a special ability to determine which actions and practices are the right ones, which is why the philosopher ought to rule.

The middle books of the *Republic* are most famous for the metaphysics and ontology they present with strikingly vivid and original imagery. Socrates and his interlocutors ascend to these metaphysical heights as the result of explaining and defending Socrates' shocking claim that the Kallipolis will arise only if philosophers become rulers, or else the rulers become philosophers (473d). As we have seen, it turns out that philosophers

alone have knowledge of real beings, namely, the Forms. In Books 6–7 the Forms are described in greater detail, through the images of the Sun, Line, and Cave, as are also the nature and education required for potential philosophers/rulers.

I shall only trace a specific line of thought through Plato's metaphysics. Applying the aiming/determining distinction I shall argue that the Forms play a critical role for moral epistemology: they are the answer – or perhaps more accurately the promise of an answer – to the determining questions posed by Socrates in earlier dialogues. There are many passages that show that the philosopher's knowledge of the Forms enables him to determine which particular actions and practices are truly just, and that without such knowledge these determinations cannot be properly made. Thus I offer a different way of explaining the significance of the metaphysics of the central books. Some scholars attempt to integrate the middle books into the *Republic* as a whole by claiming that they present a metaphysical defense of justice.[39] On such a view an understanding of the Forms contributes to understanding why we should *be* just.[40] On the view defended here, this is an aiming question addressed primarily in Books 4, 8, and 9, while the metaphysics in Books 5–7 addresses the determining question of what the *content* of justice and virtue is, and who will know it. In the preceding sections we have seen how important resolving these determining questions is: the creation and maintenance of a just and healthy soul depend upon it. We saw that throughout the account of education in Books 2 and 3 there is a tension between the description of the stories necessary for generating the virtues, and Socrates' explicit claim that they could not know whether the education they had described was right. The Forms determine the nature of actions, characters, and bodies.[41]

[39] See, e.g., Cooper (1977/1999); Dahl (1991/2000); Irwin (1995), 298–317; Kraut (1992b). Brown (2004) discusses and raises problems for these views. Scott (2000), esp. 19, disputes the idea that there is any "metaphysical defense of justice" actually executed in the *Republic*. Although he believes such a defense "would have packed far more punch," he argues that Socrates limits himself to psychological argument, which is more appropriate for his less advanced audience.

[40] I do not need to deny that the philosophers may possess additional motivations for being just that non-philosophers lack; I simply deny that this is what makes them particularly special. Thus I can explain how the details of a philosopher's abilities and of the educational process that gets him there is indeed a "digression" (as Socrates says at 543c4–6) from the main topic – the aiming question of "Why be just?" – that looks at the determining question of what makes an action just and who has knowledge of that. If the metaphysics is an essential part of the defense of why we should be just, then it could hardly count as a "digression"; see Brown (2004), n. 23, where he attributes a similar objection to Myles Burnyeat, and feels that he could dismiss it if there were better evidence that Books 5–7 dealt with the "gap" between being psychologically just and practically just. The view that the metaphysics addresses determining questions that have been outstanding in all of the dialogues can take this passage in stride.

[41] Kraut (1992b), 318 briefly raises and dismisses a position similar to mine in which Forms are important because knowledge of them is necessary to avoid errors in judgement about what is truly just. By

Particular actions and bodies have the characters they have because of their association with the Forms. The Forms appear to be everywhere because of their association with particulars (476a5–8). What makes an action or a person just is the participation in the Form of Justice.[42] This is familiar Platonic metaphysics. But it has important repercussions for our discussion. The Form of Justice is the answer in the *Republic* to the unanswered "What is F?" question of the dialogues of definition. The account of justice in *Republic* 4, as we have seen, goes no distance towards addressing the problem of the *Euthyphro* – just as the "being" answers in the dialogues of definition did not mitigate the dialogues' ending in aporia; such answers did not contribute towards determining what the solution was to the particular dilemma that gave rise to the discussion (see 4.2). Knowledge of the Forms, however, is precisely the substantive knowledge of all of the virtues that makes the answering of determining questions possible. Indeed it is because the philosophers can answer such questions correctly that they are most fit to rule.

In several passages Socrates makes clear that the philosopher will use his knowledge of the Forms to answer the outstanding determining questions. Consider this passage from the beginning of Book 6, which immediately follows the account of how the philosophers differ from the sight-lovers and how Forms differ from sensibles at the end of Book 5:

> Do they seem to you any different than blind people – those who are lacking in reality knowledge of the being of each thing [i.e. of Forms] and who have no clear model [παράδειγμα] in their soul, and are not capable, just as a painter is, to gaze at the most real thing [εἰς τὸ ἀληθέστατον], both referring and contemplating constantly *there* [κἀκεῖσε ἀεί] as precisely as possible, and *then* in this way both to establish beliefs [νόμιμα] *here* about fine and just and good things, if they need to be established, and by guarding them to preserve the [beliefs] that have been laid down? (484c6–d3)

I have translated this complex sentence literally and ungracefully in order to bring out certain clear contrasts that are explicit in the Greek. The philosopher, having knowledge of the Forms, has a model in his soul to which, like a painter, he can refer. The painter looks at the real thing, the model, and then paints the image. Similarly the philosopher goes from looking "there" – i.e., at the realm of Forms – in order to establish the common beliefs/customs/laws about justice, and so on, "here," namely in the sensible world, that need establishing, and to preserve and protect the

contrast, according to Kraut, 319, Forms are the best kinds of goods, which "we must possess in order to be happy."

[42] See also Socrates' "safe answer" in the *Phaedo* (100b–e).

appropriate ones that have already been established. The philosopher uses the Forms to settle the determining questions that have eluded resolution until now. Knowing what the Forms of Justice and Fineness are she will know which practices and actions are just and fine here. He (or she) will therefore know how to generate just souls, which we know are souls that have the good of psychic health, and will be able to answer the questions about education that had to be left only tentatively answered in Books 2 and 3. In what ways and to what extent the knowledge of the philosopher will match our "ordinary" conception of justice is unclear, and meant to remain so.[43]

Prior to any discussion of the Form of the Good or the three famous images, Socrates already talks of the effect that the philosopher would have on education. If there were a "necessity"[44] for him to mold other human characters (ἤθη), besides his own, in public and private in accordance with what he sees "there," he would be a good craftsman "of temperance and justice and of all civic virtue" (500d4–8). We learn that the way he will generate such people is by looking frequently "in either direction" – that is, at the Forms themselves and at the sensibles that he wants to mold in the likeness of the Forms. Using a painting metaphor once again, Socrates describes the philosopher as looking towards "the just by nature and the fine and the temperate and all such things," and then looking at what needs to be instilled in human beings, "mixing and blending together the human-colored paint from practices [ἐκ τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτῶν]" (501b1–7). In the course of looking "there" and then "here" he shapes the proper characters of human being by dictating what practices (ἐπιτηδεύματα) they should engage in and, as above, what the beliefs and customs (νόμιμα) should be about the just, the fine, and so on. It is clear that what the philosopher is doing is making the correct determinations of which actions and practices generate the appropriate type of character in keeping with the habituation principle. In other words the philosopher will do thoroughly and correctly what Socrates tried to do roughly and tentatively in Books 2 and 3 in the course of describing the education that generates virtuous types. Thus the

[43] We might think of the Recollection Theory of the *Meno* and *Phaedo* in this regard. While there is no mention of recollection in the *Republic*, it would, if true, give us some reason to be confident that our beliefs about virtue were not entirely off-base insofar as they are the result of being reminded of the Forms which each person's soul knew before birth.

[44] Talk of necessity appears to foreshadow the philosopher's obligation to "descend" into the cave once again. See below and 519d ff. Yu (2000) focuses on what he calls "the paradox" of the philosopher's obligation to give up contemplation and play a political role. His view, 132–3, that the philosopher who refused to return to the "cave" would still in a sense be just, does not take into account Glaucon's response to Socrates that it is "impossible" for the philosopher to disobey the order to return, "for we are ordering just things to just people" (520e1). See Brown (2000).

philosopher will provide the wisdom and knowledge that presides over actions that are truly just and so preserve and promote a harmonious soul (cf. 443e–444a, discussed in 8.3); and the non-philosopher will realize this.

Once the Form of the Good is introduced it turns out that knowledge of it is the ultimate culmination of the highest education of the very best types; the Form of the Good is the unhypothetical first principle of everything and itself transcends even being (508e ff.). I shall not offer an account of what this heady description means (even Glaucon is a bit overwhelmed by it [509c]), or of how the Form of the Good operates in Plato's metaphysics.[45] For my purposes, what is important is the role that such knowledge is taken to play in the determination of which particular actions and practices are virtuous. Socrates is clear that knowledge of the Form of the Good is necessary for anyone who is to make such determinations correctly: "it is necessary for one who intends *to act wisely* [ἐμφρόνως πράξειν] either in private or in public to have seen this [the Form of the Good]" (517c4–5). This recalls the earlier claim in Book 4 (444a) that the just person would call wisdom the knowledge that "presided over" the just action. The philosopher will be compelled to descend into the "Cave" once again, and not simply remain in contemplation of the Forms. Once the philosopher has become habituated to seeing the shadows he will be able to discern them countless times better than those who are ignorant of the Forms (520c). But before he has had this habituation, when he first arrives from "there," he will appear confused if he has to contend about justice "in lawcourts or anywhere else" (517d8) with people who have never seen the Form of Justice. What is important here for me is that the philosopher *will be* contending in such situations: he will be making determinations about what is just in a lawcourt (cf. Euthyphro's prosecution of his father, Meletus' prosecution of Socrates).[46] This shows that the role of the metaphysics is not to support the claim *that* a person should be just/virtuous above all (i.e., to defend SV, a particular answer to an aiming question); this argument has been interrupted after Book 4 and will resume in Books 8 and 9. Here Socrates explains what the knowledge is that the philosopher-king will possess that will enable him to *determine* which actions and practices *are* truly just and good.

[45] See Annas (1981), ch. 10; Irwin (1995), ch. 16; Reeve (1988), ch. 2 and Reeve (2003). See Silverman (2002) for a discussion of Plato's metaphysics in general.

[46] Burnyeat (2000), 56 emphasizes the abstract nature of the philosopher's knowledge: "For Plato, the important task of ruling is not day-to-day decision-making, but establishing and maintaining good structures, both institutional and psychological. In both city and soul, dispositions and structure are prior to their expression in action (433d–434c, 443b–444a)." I am arguing that the text makes clear that the philosophers will also contend in quite concrete arenas. Further, I emphasized above (7.2–3) that "dispositions and structures" are brought about, in turn, by concrete actions.

Although, prior to his habituation to sensible affairs (a process that will take fifteen years to complete [540a4]), he may get confused about these things, a fundamental goal of that process will be the ability to make determinations correctly about what is just and fine, and so on, *here* based on his knowledge of what justice and so on themselves are *there*. The person who is not a philosopher and therefore lacks knowledge of the Form of the Good will know neither the Good itself "nor any other good thing" (οὔτε ἄλλο ἀγαθὸν οὐδέν, 534c4–5). But once the education is complete, the philosophers will properly order themselves, the citizens, and the state by looking at the Form of the Good and "using it as a model" (παραδείγματι χρωμένους ἐκείνῳ, 540a9). It is part of the duty of the philosophers, armed with this rare knowledge, to make the correct determinations about which actions and practices are the truly just ones and therefore generate truly virtuous characters. The repeated image of the painter and the use of a "paradigm" at which to look explicitly recalls Socrates' language in the *Euthyphro*, where he was looking for a way to determine which actions are the pious ones. Thus in the middle books of the *Republic* the Forms play a critical role and are meant to solve an outstanding problem for moral epistemology: even if we know that one ought to aim at virtue, and why, what *is* virtue either in general or in the here and now? The Forms are the virtues "in general" and the philosophers, knowing them, will be able to answer definitively the questions about what is just in the here and now.[47]

8.5 THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF BOOKS 8 AND 9

At the beginning of Book 8, Glaucon reminds everyone where they were at the end of Book 4, before they "digressed" (543c5) to discuss the metaphysics of the middle books. I have argued that those books addressed – or at least explained who would address and how – the outstanding determining questions about the nature of justice and the good. The claim that they are now returning in Book 8 to an earlier issue fits well with the thesis defended here that Books 4, 8, and 9 address the aiming question of why a person is better off performing truly just actions and so truly being just. Socrates asks Glaucon to offer him "the same hold" just as in a wrestling match (544b4). Socrates will retain this simile throughout to delimit the three arguments that follow. It is important to understand it properly. The fact that Socrates asks Glaucon to give him the same hold shows that there has yet to be a fall; three falls constitute victory. This is what we would

[47] As well as such questions could ever be answered in the sensible realm.

expect. So far Socrates has only shown that there is a good for the soul that the just person possesses, namely, psychic harmony. In order to throw the opponent the first time, he must show that this good is not *also* possessed by those who fail to have a just soul. From the beginning of Book 8 until 580a in Book 9, Socrates explains how the different degenerate constitutions, and the character-types from which such governments arise (see 544d), fail to achieve the good for the soul that is justice, and which constitutes the character of people in the best city. Socrates shows that, in the degenerate state, first spirit (in the timocratic man), then appetite (in the oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical man) subvert the leadership role of reason and set up new ends. He thus explains how these degenerate types fail to achieve the good in itself that is the harmony and "health" of the just soul described in Book 4. This constitutes a "first fall" because it is the first time we have seen a respect in which the just person is "better off" than the unjust with respect to his soul.

We have seen in chapter six that injustice is thought by the many to be a good in itself, and that what it means to be a good in itself is to be a good for the soul. Further, the puzzle raised by Glaucon and Adeimantus is to show that a just person is better off with respect to his soul, that is, that he possesses more goods for the soul, disregarding goods for the body or material possessions, than the unjust person. Part of what makes the next two arguments in Book 9, both of which focus on pleasure, seem problematic is that they are supposed to be about whether the just person is happier than the unjust. Commentators who focus on the eudaimonist framework worry about the arguments concerning which life is more pleasurable because, if Plato endorses this as part of an argument about which person is happier, then his conception of happiness seems to involve pleasure.[48] But Plato is hostile to hedonism earlier in the *Republic* (505c, 509a), as well as in other places in the corpus. As a result some scholars simply marginalize the arguments about pleasure as an optional extra for the just person, but not part of the main argument about whether he is happier or not.[49] Throughout this book, however, I have tried to interpret Plato independently of any reliance on eudaimonism. If we follow the understanding of Glaucon's and Adeimantus' challenge I argued for in chapter six, Socrates should show how the just person possesses more goods for the soul than the unjust person. I am perfectly willing to agree that he speaks of this as showing that

[48] Butler (1999a) suggests that the solution is to embrace the idea that Plato is arguing hedonistically, but he does not work this out in detail.

[49] For example, Kraut (1992b); see also Annas (1981), 306.

the just person is "happier" than the unjust,[50] but I do not think it is the concept of happiness that is doing the real work in the argument. Rather, as I emphasized in chapter six, the only good for the soul recognized by the many is the pleasure of desire satisfaction, which acting justly frustrates. Thus the goodness of injustice consists in the pleasure for the soul of desire satisfaction: particularly the allegedly natural desire for *pleonexia* without limits.[51]

If this is right, we can understand why Socrates spends the time he does in Book 9 discussing the contrasting pleasures involved in different sorts of lives. In particular, it is critical for him to address the pleasure associated with injustice and show that is *not* the good for the soul that it seems to the many. If he neglects this part of the argument, injustice remains a good in itself, even if, after Book 4, we see that justice is good for the soul as well.[52] This is why, despite Glaucon's protestations, the task of defending justice is not complete at the end of Book 4. A just soul may be still frustrated in at least some of its appetites insofar as it refrains from taking what it wants, even though it has gained a different good for itself, namely health or harmony.[53] By the time we get to 580a in Book 9, it is clear that

[50] See Butler (1999a), p. 37, n. 1.

[51] Essentially the position of Thrasymachus and Callicles: see 359c and chapters three and five.

[52] So I am arguing in part against the position defended by Kraut (1992b), who writes (314): "So, in order to accomplish the task Plato assigns himself in the *Republic* it is both necessary and sufficient that he show why justice is so much more advantageous than injustice. But he never says or implies that if he can show that justice brings greater pleasures, then that by itself will be a sufficient or a necessary defense of justice. By supporting justice in terms of pleasure, Plato is showing that there is even more reason to lead the just life than we may have supposed. But the fundamental case for justice has been made before the discussion of pleasure has begun . . . we can rest content with our earlier conclusion that pleasure has a modest role to play in the overall scheme of the *Republic*." Kraut, like Cross and Woozley (1964), ch. 11 and Murphy (1951), ch. 5, finds the apparently sudden switch to a discussion of pleasure late in Book 9 puzzling and something to be explained away. On my view, even if the arguments are weaker than we might like, they play an understandable and necessary role in the overall response to Glaucon and Adeimantus, as Plato says they do. By showing the pleasure of just actions Plato is not simply giving us more reason to pursue the just life – nor, as Annas (1981), 314, claims, is he showing that the just life has "good consequences." Rather, he is showing that the alleged value of injustice for the soul is in reality worthless and superseded by the nature and quantity of pleasure that stems from the just life.

[53] There is no reason to think that a just person would not still want, say, a rare first edition which she has no way of justly obtaining. Of course she would never take it unjustly, even if she could take it with impunity (having Gyges' ring), but that does not mean she would no longer want to have it, and that her desire for it would not thereby be frustrated. This is true regardless of how she experiences restraining herself from taking the book. I say this to leave room for a conception of the virtuous person along the lines of John McDowell's (1979) article, where the reasons to act contrary to virtue are "silenced" for the virtuous person. McDowell, I think, would acknowledge that the virtuous person might still say, "I would love to have that first edition," even if she would never be *attracted* to stealing it; that is, she experiences no struggle in doing what is right. But even if her

non-virtuous types all fail to have this good for the soul. But thinking about it this way we can see that the argument is not complete. Thrasymachus might concede that his hero fails to have the health that is psychic harmony, and that therefore he fails to possess something that is good for the soul. But the good in itself that is desire satisfaction remains for the possessor of the Ring who is willing to act unjustly. Surely, Thrasymachus might insist, such a person has a far more pleasurable, if less healthy, life. We have, then, a stand-off with the just person possessing one type of good in itself, psychic health, and the unjust person another, appetite- or honor-satisfaction. We can now understand why it is important that Plato, in a much-maligned section of the *Republic*, develops two arguments regarding the pleasures of the philosopher versus the pleasures of the tyrant.[54] If he is to confront and refute Thrasymachus' position, as developed by Glaucon and Adeimantus, he must not only show that justice is a good in itself possessed only by the just person (which he has done), but also that being unjust is not a competing good in itself insofar as it is pleasurable (desire-satisfying) and that being just is not also an evil in itself insofar as it is painful (desire-frustrating).

I believe that there is also a second motivation for the arguments about pleasure. Pleasure understood as appetite gratification has posed a particular challenge for Socrates in the positions of Thrasymachus and Callicles with respect to determining questions. As we have seen, if excellence consists wholly or in part in appetite gratification, then determining what the excellent action is in particular circumstances (and in general) becomes a much more straightforward task: the excellent action is the action that gratifies one's appetite. One can, relatively simply, read off what the right action is simply from one's desires. As the dialogues point out, this is not always as easy as it seems: one's appetites can conflict with one another, either immediately or in the longer term. But it is still a relatively simpler matter. In the hedonist argument of the *Protagoras*, for example, determining what excellence is reduces to the art of measurement.[55] What is best, what is

frustration is not experienced as psychologically painful, it remains true of her nevertheless that she has a desire which is frustrated. This would partly mitigate the challenge of Book 2, where acting justly was described not only as useless but as "harsh" and "painful." If McDowell is right, then it is not so for the virtuous person. But she is nevertheless not achieving the good for the soul that desire satisfaction still is at this point in the argument.

[54] This is not to say that I think that the arguments that follow are good ones. The *Philebus*, of course, revisits the question of the role of pleasure in the good life. The advantage of the view defended here is that it explains *why* such arguments are a necessary part of Plato's accomplishing his goal of showing that the just person is better off than the unjust.

[55] See 4.4.

most excellent, is simply what is *most* pleasant just as the best runner is the fastest, and the strongest person is the one who can lift the most. There is no longer a question of getting virtue *right* or of determining what is *truly* virtuous, apart from ensuring that a lesser desire does not get fulfilled at the cost of leaving a greater desire unfulfilled. The nature of virtue is not a feature of the world about which we need knowledge; rather it is, at most, a matter of correctly ordering the relative strengths of our desires.

I shall only look at the two arguments about pleasure in enough detail to argue for understanding them in the way I have said. They remain deeply problematic in themselves.[56] The first is from 580c–583b.[57] The goal of the argument is to show that it is the just person who in reality possesses the good for the soul of the most and best pleasure, not the unimpeded unjust person, as the many think. Socrates refers again to the tripartite division of the soul, and now characterizes people as falling into three types corresponding to the three parts of the soul: the lover of learning or philosopher, the lover of honor, and the lover of gain or profit. The tripartite account of the soul generates three possible sources of desire and motivation,[58] whereas the many equated desire simply with what would now be called "appetite fulfillment." These three types are depicted as living three different sorts of lives, each devoted to the pleasure associated with their particular end: learning and truth, honor and glory, appetite fulfillment and money (581c8–d3). If you asked each one which life was the most pleasant, each would answer that his own was and think little of the others'. He then poses the challenge in striking terms:

> Given, then, that the pleasures of each type, as well as each [type of] life, are in dispute – not about whether living [one type of life] is finer and [another] more shameful [κάλλιον καὶ αἴσχιον] nor about whether one is better and [another] worse [τὸ χεῖρον καὶ ἄμεινον], but about whether [one life] itself is more pleasant and more painless [than another] – how can we know which of these [three characters] speaks most truly? (581e6–582a2)

Socrates and his interlocutors are accustomed to arguing about which type of life, or which type of pleasure, is more noble or more shameful, or better or worse; once an interlocutor agrees that the pleasant is not simply

[56] For discussion of the two arguments see, e.g., Annas (1981), 305–20; Butler (1999b); Gosling and Taylor (1982), ch. 6; Murphy (1951), ch. 5; Reeve (1988), 144–53.

[57] Socrates calls this the "second demonstration" that the just person is the best and happiest, and the unjust the worst and most miserable; the first being the contrast in the state of soul between the just person (Book 4) and the degenerate types (Books 8–9, until 580a).

[58] See Cooper (1984/1999).

identical with the good, hedonism is defeated.[59] But now the topic is not what is nobler or more excellent, but simply what is most pleasant. Socrates says that there is even dispute about *this*, which is a surprising and much less familiar argument, both in Plato and in ordinary life. While people often dispute whether a certain pleasure is noble or not, it is taken as obvious in such discussions that indulging in the pleasure is itself more pleasurable than refraining. The issue raised in Book 2 is addressed and challenged here. In Book 2 appetite gratification, doing "whatever one wishes," is simply equated with pleasure, but at this point we understand that there are *three* sorts of pleasures, and so which is the most pleasant becomes the very subject of contention. The aiming/determining distinction helps us to see the importance of this question. One attraction of hedonism, in any form, is that it appeared to offer a relatively simple way of settling determining questions about what one ought to do, both in general and in the here and now. But if, as Socrates now suggests, the very idea of what is most pleasant is *itself* contentious, such a straightforward move is no longer available. Socrates proposes that the matter be settled according to three criteria: experience (ἐμπειρία), wisdom (φρόνησις), and argument (λόγος) (582a). Then he argues that the philosopher is the far superior judge since he possesses greater experience, wisdom, and facility at argument than the other two types. Therefore his judgement that the philosophical life is most pleasant is most authoritative. Continuing the wrestling image, this constitutes the second fall for the proponent of injustice: in fact the philosopher's pleasures are greater than the unjust person's.

We might note that this argument works in a way similar to the argument against the sight-lovers in Book 5. I argued above that its purpose was to instill a sort of Socratic wisdom: an awareness that one does not have knowledge. In Book 5, however, there was an *argument* that was supposed to show non-philosophers that, in order for knowledge to be possible, there must be Forms, and that without knowledge of Forms a person would be relegated to belief about the nature of the just, the beautiful, and so on. Here the audiences of the inner and outer frames are again supposed to acquire a sort of Socratic wisdom: an awareness that they are ignorant of the pleasures of philosophy. But this time there is no argument to this effect, but simply an appeal to experience. Philosophers have experienced something that non-philosophers have not and we non-philosophers must take their

[59] This is the standard Platonic move against extreme hedonism: surely the pleasant is not simply the same as the good, so that there are no cases in which what is pleasant and what is good come apart? See *Rep*. 6, 505b–c, 509a; cf. also Socrates' example of the catamite against Callicles (*Gor.* 494d ff.), discussed in chapter three.

word for it that it is most pleasant. While I imagine that the arguments of Books 5–7 regarding the unique capacities of Plato's philosophers that justify their rule strike modern readers as inadequate, this appeal to the philosophers' unique experience works still less well.

What is potentially even more worrying is how considerations about the pleasure of the philosopher are supposed to appeal to the non-philosopher. I emphasized above the importance of the potentiality of non-philosophers to be led in a way by reason, so that they could have harmonious souls and see that acting justly would turn out to be a good for their souls. But in this first argument about pleasure it seems that grasp of the greatness of the pleasure of learning about the "things that are" is restricted to philosophers alone (582b2–6, 582c7–9). If this is true, it may appear to be a problem for successfully completing the reply to Glaucon and Adeimantus, if the non-philosopher is entirely cut off from this type of pleasure. I think that the next argument will mitigate this unattractive conclusion. Socrates here claims, correctly, that the philosopher alone will have the *greatest* pleasure in truly knowing the things that are – and non-philosophers simply have to take his word for it. But in the next argument we shall see that others are not entirely cut off from the *sort* of pleasure that the philosopher, as the most just person, experiences.

The second argument about pleasure (583b–587c) is counted as the third argument overall, and the one which Socrates calls "the greatest and most decisive" (μέγιστόν τε καὶ κυριώτατον, 583b6). I do not think that we need to make much of this claim, as long as we keep the wrestling metaphor in mind.[60] Socrates is not saying that this argument about pleasure is more important than the argument about psychic harmony; it is rather that, since it will constitute the third fall for the proponent of injustice, it will constitute a victory over him. According to the previous argument, the pleasures of learning and knowledge are greater than the pleasures of the other parts of the soul. Thrasymachus might concede this and yet still insist that appetitive pleasure is of a superior *kind* – for example, more manly – and that the tyrant has more of this sort of pleasure. Plato's third argument aims to remove this final possibility.

What is important about this "most decisive throw" for our purposes is that its argument about pleasure is less exclusive than the previous one. As above, if the arguments regarding pleasure concern a kind of pleasure that is not at all attainable by non-philosophers, then it remains unclear

[60] Kraut (1992b), 312–13 tries to downplay its significance, while Butler (1999a) and (1999b) seems to exaggerate it.

why appeal to it would be persuasive to them. If to know the pleasure of the truly just person is to know the pleasure of the philosopher, which is to know what the philosopher knows – the objective nature of the Just itself, the Good itself, and the rest of the Forms – then the above objection would appear to be decisive. In fact, however, a key passage allows the distinctive pleasure of the rational part to be available to characters who do not themselves possess knowledge – that is, to non-philosophers. This is a welcome conclusion, for then, even if a non-philosopher cannot have the amount of pleasure that a philosopher can in contemplating the Forms, he can nevertheless experience a lesser, but similar, kind of pleasure. Consider the following passage:

> Which kinds do you believe participate more in pure being, those such as bread, drink, and delicacies, and, generally, nourishment, or the kind of true belief, knowledge, and understanding [τὸ δόξης τε ἀληθοῦς εἶδος καὶ ἐπιστήμης καὶ νοῦ], or, again, in sum, of all of virtue? (585b11–c2)

What is interesting here is that the cognitive states that constitute a "filling up" of the rational part include *true belief*, as well as knowledge and understanding. True belief, which as we have seen is a cognitive state that the non-philosophers of the Kallipolis share in, is included as part of the distinctive pleasure of the rational part of the soul. While it is surely not the same as having knowledge of the Forms, it is presented as akin nevertheless. So a non-philosopher, guided by the philosopher in acting truly justly, will also act in a way so as to partake to a degree in the highest kind of pleasure.

By the end of this argument (simply assuming it is successful) the unjust person (1) does not have the good for the soul of psychic health (but instead the evil in itself of a disharmonious soul) (Book 4 and Books 8 and 9 until 580a); (2) has smaller pleasures than the just person; and (3) has qualitatively inferior pleasures. Thus, the person who acts unjustly with impunity has no advantage for his soul whatsoever.

Beginning from the argument of Book 4 that the just person's soul is the one with psychic health, consisting in the rule of the rational part, Book 9 adds that the pleasures of the rational part (learning, knowledge of truth, and so on) are the greatest in quantity and also the "highest, purest, and most true" of the pleasures. And what is more, only when the soul is led by reason will the lower parts of the soul also achieve the truest pleasures that they can achieve, albeit of secondary quality (586e). At 590c7–d6, Socrates says that in the best situation people will be governed by having wisdom in themselves, but otherwise they ought to be the "slaves" of the best person

(i.e., the philosopher, who does have wisdom in herself). This passage points again to two possibilities for being led by reason with knowledge: in one case, one has the knowledge for oneself, in the second one obeys the one who has knowledge.[61]

So the tyrant will fail to have psychic health, will fail to have the greatest amount of pleasure, will fail to have the truest and most real pleasures, and will not even have the best pleasures that are possible for the lower parts of his soul. Thus, in fact, there are *no* goods for the soul that accrue to the tyrant when compared with the just person. The argument against Thrasymachus is now complete. While I have not tried to defend the arguments about pleasure in Book 9, and they may well have fatal flaws, we can understand why they are necessary for completing the reply to Glaucon and Adeimantus. They are designed to eliminate any competing goods for the soul that might be left to the unjust person over the just person. As long as pleasure is not addressed, the defender of Thrasymachus might still maintain that the unjust person possessed some compensating good for the soul not had by the just person. Socrates seeks to leave him no good whatsoever.

There is one final aspect to the argument, which involves the metaphysics of the middle books. In chapters five and six, we saw that part of the Thrasymachean position is that the defense of the value of justice, in addition to everything else, is based on a type of illusion: the defender of justice falsely believes that justice has objective value in a way that a person who is more sophisticated and less naïve understands is false. Justice is not something real, in accordance with which the just person acts. When Socrates relies on the ontology and metaphysics from Books 5–7 to ground his claims about the greatness and superiority of the philosopher's pleasure

[61] We might hesitate to see the second possibility as a positive one, since the person in the second condition is called a "slave" of the one who knows. See Bobonich (2002), 106 and 203. But in this passage Socrates is explicitly recalling Thrasymachus' immoralist speech, where Thrasymachus lauded the abilities of the complete tyrant who "enslaved" the entire city (344b5–c2). He is picking up on Thrasymachus' language, not making a substantive point about the classes in the Kallipolis. It is true that, as we have seen, the lower classes will obey the philosopher-kings, but the relationship will be a harmonious one. Here too Socrates emphasizes that everyone being guided by wisdom (either their own for the philosophers, or others' for the rest) will make all the classes "akin and friends" (590d6). This recalls the earlier passage (431c–e), where moderation in the city consists in the harmonious relationship between the classes and in their agreement about who should rule and who should be ruled. Further, at 463b Socrates says that in cities *other than* the Kallipolis the rulers call the people "slaves," but in the Kallipolis the rulers call them "wage-payers" and "food-providers" and the ruled call the rulers "preservers" and "auxiliaries." Thus, the word "slaves" which Socrates uses here in Book 9 ought to be understood as picking up on the language of Thrasymachus, which is also the "ordinary" language, about those who are ruled.

in the final argument, we see Socrates attacking this head on. The defender of injustice does not have the truth about the nature of justice, but is in fact stuck in a position from which he does not even recognize real pleasure. Not only does the just person possess all the goods for the soul, she alone best grasps what is most real. It is Thrasymachus and the defender of injustice who fail to connect to reality, not the proponent of justice.

CHAPTER 9

Epilogue

In this book I provide an interpretation of the dialogues of Plato that most centrally treat the concept of virtue. It may be of interest to some readers to summarize briefly the view that has emerged and in conclusion to say something, albeit brief and tentative, about the philosophical plausibility of this interpretation, its relation to certain later ethical theories with which it has the most in common, and its potential value.

In a number of respects I have treated these very familiar dialogues quite differently from the way they have been approached in recent years. Perhaps the most significant difference in approach is the avoidance of interpreting Plato's ethics in terms of the eudaimonist framework. As I say several times, it is not that I think that Plato's ethics is not eudaimonist. Rather it is that in the texts themselves the overwhelming focus is on virtue as a supreme end and aim. The typical way that the eudaimonist framework operates in interpreting ancient ethics is to say that we know what the highest good, what the supreme aim, is: eudaimonia. What we then need to do next is determine what eudaimonia is. Is it a state or an activity? Does it consist exclusively of virtue or are external goods part of it? The serious downside of this approach to reading Plato is that it obscures, I argue, what are in fact the more central puzzles about ethics in the dialogues.

The way Socrates actually proceeds in the dialogues is by explicitly claiming that virtue ought to trump any other aim we might have in acting. By understanding SV as an answer to an aiming question, I put to one side the issue of the relationship between doing the right thing and happiness. I call attention instead to the blunt fact that this is what Socrates says is the supreme end. Beginning in the *Apology*, Socrates trumpets SV and claims that everyone should join him in his absolute commitment to it. Setting out from this claim, the dialogues about virtue then launch investigations in two directions. The first is to ask an aiming question: why should I be committed to doing the virtuous action above all in preference to an action that, for example, keeps me alive or gratifies my appetites? In other

words, why should I be a virtuous person, where a virtuous person is one who is committed absolutely to SV? The second line of investigation turns to determining questions: given that I *am* committed to acting virtuously above all, how do I determine what the virtuous action is?

I show that thinking about Platonic ethics in this way yields views about the dialogues that render them quite consistent across these topics, including Socrates' claims about what he does and does not know, culminating in the *Republic*. The ethical philosophy that emerges is the following. One should commit above all to doing the right thing. To do the right thing should be the supreme aim of one's action understood either as an explicit aim or as a limiting condition (expressed in the formulation, "it is never right to do wrong"). The reason why one should be committed and motivated to act in this way is that only by so acting will one have the most important part of oneself, one's soul, become and remain in a healthy condition. There is no good that can compensate for the harm of the most important part of oneself being corrupt and unhealthy. A central aspect of my argument, however, is that this conclusion does not imply that one should never, for example, escape from prison or take what does not belong to one. Such conclusions must await resolution of the second issue: how to determine which actions *are* virtuous.

The definitive answer to the determining questions lies in knowledge of the Forms. The very best sorts of people can have knowledge of the Forms for themselves; those who cannot, if they are fortunate enough to live in a Kallipolis, can listen to those (the philosophers) who do know. So the Forms are the keys to resolving determining questions, while harmony in the tripartite soul answers the aiming question of why one should commit to virtue above all. Between these two issues lies the commitment to the supremacy of virtue.

The idea that the type of actions we perform repeatedly becomes habitual and thereby affects and effects the type of characters we have is a plausible and rather persuasive, if controversial, view.[1] So too I imagine is the idea that the condition of our souls or characters is more significant, ethically, than the condition of our bodies or possessions. These are ideas that are central to Aristotle's ethics and the contemporary work in virtue ethics inspired by him. I have tried to bring out in this book the extent to which these concepts originate in and are central to Plato's dialogues as well.

[1] Doris (2002) raises questions about the truth of character-based ethics in general. See Kamtekar (2002) for a critical assessment.

In the end, however, the metaphysics of Forms is a promissory note – the Forms are where the content of virtue is, if you are a philosopher who can apprehend them – and a dubious one at that. The course of education that generates a philosopher is not accomplished by a reading of the dialogues, no matter how sophisticated. Experts in Plato's metaphysics do not know the Form of Justice or the Form of the Good, of course. At best they have views about what knowledge of such Forms must be like, for example, a sudden, ineffable flash of intuition or, on other accounts, an articulable set of propositions.

In any case, Plato's full-blown metaphysics, while critical for his ethical project if my argument is correct, is nevertheless obviously not tenable for contemporary philosophers. We do not believe that there is a Form of Justice that explains the justice of token just actions, the knowledge of which would enable one to know which token actions are just and which unjust. A fortiori we do not believe that there are certain specially trained people who in fact have the knowledge of these objects. So Plato's promissory note that Forms are where the definitive answers to our determining questions lie is not satisfactory for us or, we might imagine, for the frustrated Cleitophon.

Before abandoning them altogether, however, I hope that this book indicates the significance of the problems in ethics that Forms are supposed to solve. If all of the right actions have something in common, what is it? Unsatisfying though it is, if these essences existed and you could know them, then you would have knowledge of what right actions have in common. Further, once we reject the existence of Forms the reading of the dialogues I have defended should show that we need something to replace them in order to answer determining questions in a knowledgeable way. Without philosopher-kings or any divine sign we are thrown back to the condition of Socrates and Crito in the *Crito*. Perhaps this is a reasonable and tenable position. Committed explicitly, particularly in difficult and morally weighty situations, to doing the virtuous thing above all, we should have the humility to realize that we do not have knowledge in the definitive sense that would be had by knowledge of Forms, and so must be open to following the argument that seems upon reflection best to us. Even if this were the position left us, it could have, as I suggest in the Introduction, significant and positive effects on the virtue of our actions if we avoided having "one thought too few" by keeping SV in view and combined that with avoiding the sort of "moralizing" that prematurely takes determining questions to be settled.

It may be useful simply to point to how this way of understanding Plato's ethics compares with Aristotle. Unsurprisingly, Aristotle also holds that it is never right to do wrong and that no aim ought to trump doing the right

thing. Why does he think one should be moral? His move is similar to Plato's but appeals to what, on his view, human beings (or, more accurate to Aristotle's own account, men) are by nature. This explains why we ought to be committed to virtuous action above all and not to pleasure, for example, or honor. When it comes to answering determining questions, Aristotle does not, of course, appeal to Forms. Rather, for Aristotle, the content of virtue is going to come from a proper upbringing. This account, unlike Plato's, can seem far more plausible to us.[2]

Finally, I hope that the reading of Plato's ethics I offer may contribute somewhat towards countering the detrimental trend, particularly among the relatively well-educated populace, of shying away from the idea that doing the right thing ought to be our supreme aim, even without having a definitive way of determining what the right thing to do is. I think that politics would be beneficially affected were societies and nations to commit in a Socratic way to SV and, while not believing in philosopher-kings and their objects of knowledge, retain a more Socratic humility about their knowledge of the content of virtue. Finally, it would help the quality and clarity of our political discourse to be clear about whether the question at issue is an aiming question – for example, "Is our survival (as individuals or even as a nation) *more important than* our doing the right thing?" – or a determining question – for example, "Is our surviving in some situation *an instance of* doing the right thing?" This distinction, as Plato sees, makes all the difference.

[2] See Vasiliou (2007) for details.

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